THE MULTIPLE FACES OF CIVIL SOCIETY
DEVELOPMENT AND DEMOCRATIZATION IN RAJASTHAN, INDIA

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADMK	Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam
ANM	Auxiliary Nurse Midwife
APL	Above Poverty Line
ASHA	Accredited Social Health Activist
AVARD	Association of Voluntary Agencies for Rural Development
BARC	Budget Analysis and Research Centre
BJD	Biju Janata Dal
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party/Indian Peoples' Party
BJS	Bharatiya Jan Sangh
BPL	Below Poverty Line
BSP	Bahujan Samaj Party
CAPART	Council for Advancement People's Action and Rural Technology
CCA	Capital Cost Allowance
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CIVA	Canada India Village Aid
CPI (M)	Communist Party of India (Marxist)
CPI (M-L)	Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist)
CPI	Communist Party of India
CSWB	Central Social Welfare Board
DMK	Dravida Munnetra Kazgham
DRDA	District Rural Development Agency
DWCRA	Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas
EC	European Commission
EED	Evangelischer Entwiklungsdienst
FCRA	Foreign Contributions Regulation Act
FLPM	Forest Land Peoples' Movement
GVC	Gram Vikash Committee/Village Development Committee
GVK	Gram Vikash Kosh/Village Development Fund
ICAR	Indian Council of Agricultural Research
ICCO	Interchurch Organization for Development Cooperation
ICS	Indian Civil Service
IDRF	India Development and Relief Fund
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IMR	Infant Mortality Rate
INC	Indian National Congress
IRMA	Institute of Rural Management, Anand
IT	Information Technology
JD	Janata Dal
JFM	Joint Forest Management
JMM	Jharkhand Mukti Morchha
JNU	Jawaharlal Nehru University

JP	Jayaprakash Narayan
JP	Justice Party
JSN	Jan Shikshan Niliyam/ Village Library
MDMK	Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam
MIT	Massachusetts Institutes of Technology
MKSS	Mazdoor Kishan Shakti Sangathan
MMR	Maternal Mortality Rate
MP	Member of Parliament
NDA	National Democratic Alliance
NFE	Non Formal Education
NGO	Non Government Organization
NRD	Natural Resource Development
NREGA	National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
PESA	Panchayati Raj Extension to the Scheduled Areas Act
PIL	Public Interest Litigation
PMK	Pattali Makkal Katchi
PMS	People's Management School
PO	Peoples' Organizations
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
PRI	Panchayati Raj Institutions
PTI	Press Trust of India
RHDR	Rajasthan Human Development Report
RJS	Rashtriya Janata Dal
RPI	Republican Party of India
RSS	Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh/ National Volunteer Corps
RTI	Right to Information
RVKP	Rajasthan Vanvasi Kalyan Parishad
SC and SACW	Sabrang Communications and South Asia Citizen's Web
SC	Scheduled Caste
SDO	Sub-Divisional Officer
SGSY	Swarnajayanti Gram Swarojgar Yojna
SHG	Self Help Group
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SP	Samajwadi Party
ST	Scheduled Tribe
SWRC	Social Work Research Centre
TB	Tuberculosis
TBA	Trained Birth Attendant
TSR	Tribal Self Rule
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations' Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VHP	Vishwa Hindu Parishad/World Hindu Council
VKP	Vanvasi Kalyan Parishad/Tribal Welfare Association
YRC	Youth Resource Centre

SUMMARY

This thesis examines how non-governmental organizations (NGOs), as part of civil society, contribute towards democratization in Rajasthan, India and what conditions facilitate or inhibit their contribution. On the basis of qualitative analysis and comparative case studies of three developmental NGOs that work among the tribal communities in the socio-historical context of south Rajasthan, the study assesses three different kinds of politics within civil society – liberal pluralist, neo-Marxist, and communitarian – which have had different implications in relation to democratization. Based on these three cases, the thesis concludes that civil society is not necessarily a democratizing force; it can have contradictory consequences in relation to democratization. The democratic effect of civil society is not a result of the "stock of social capital" in the community but is contingent upon the kinds of ideologies and interests that are present or ascendant not just within civil society but also within the state. The study, thus, presents a nuanced understanding of civil society's capacity to influence democratization in the developing world.

1

INTRODUCTION:
THE PRIMACY OF POLITICS

1.1: Introduction

Much of the literature presents civil society almost un-problematically as having played a very significant role in the “transition to” and “consolidation of” democracy in the formerly communist and authoritarian states of Latin America, Asia, the former Soviet bloc and sub-Saharan Africa. The so-called “third-wave” of democratization (Huntington, 1992) was associated with the robustness of the associational life or what Putnam (1993) has referred to as “social capital”. Participation in associational activity and generation of trust and cooperation have been considered indispensable for the establishment and deepening of democratic government.

Putnam (1993) argues that the amount of social trust, cooperation and networks of civic engagement or in other words social capital influences the performance of development and democracy. According to Putnam, societies that do not possess a high level of social capital will suffer from low rates of economic development. What he emphasizes is not what you know, but who you know (Harriss, 2002: 2). However, the problems of underdevelopment, mal-implementation of government projects and large-scale corruption are the results of patron-client networks that exist in Indian society precisely based on highly personalistic relationships. Also social capital and cooperation

seem to be very high in the rural village communities of Indian society which, unfortunately, suffers from wide-spread poverty and lack of development. This is why the Putnamian view of civil society has been criticized by Foley and Edwards (1996), Tarrow (1996), Berman (1997), Tornquist (1998), Fine (2001), Harriss (2001; 2002), Mosse (2006), DeFilippes (2001), and Putzel (1997).[1]

For the critics of Putnam, social capital is a "politically neutral multiplier – neither inherently good nor inherently bad" (Berman, 1997: 427; see also Krishna, 2002; 2007). Putnam failed to recognize the political aspects and power dimensions of social capital.[2] The pool of social capital or associationalism itself does not effect in the achievement of a particular end. It needs to be mobilized, politicized and directed towards an end – democratic or anti-democratic. It may be true that village communities do possess a heavy stock of social capital but they are not necessarily utilized for the realization of the collective interests nor are they necessarily used for democratic purposes. As Gibbon (1998) has argued, "apolitical civil societies [also] tend to produce bureaucratic authoritarian forms of state (i.e. states without politically active citizens) where these states are more concerned with reproducing the rule of law than to secure popular participation" (cited in Thorlind, 2000: 18).

This shows that the "missing link" between social capital and social change is what *politics* is about (see Putzel, 1997; Gibbon, 1998; Tornquist, 1998; Thorlind, 2000; Chandhoke, 2004; Harriss, 2001; 2002; 2006). According to Harriss (2002: 12), "action

[1] Despite many such criticisms, argues Harriss (2001: 30), "[p]art of the enthusiasm for 'constructing social capital' and 'building civil society' is that they are consistent with the neo-liberal agenda of reducing the role of the state, partly so as to make possible large cuts in public expenditure".

[2] As Mosse (2006: 714) has rightly shown, "collective action around tank irrigation [in south India] is not dependent upon trust generated through interactions and associations but is founded upon relations of caste power, graded authority, personal patronage, and the redistribution of resources (as bribes and payoffs)".

becomes political whenever the help of other people is necessary for an individual to be able to achieve her aim". Politicization of social capital through collective action is what helps people realize the common community interests. However, as Tornquist (1998) through his comparative study on Indonesia, India and the Philippines has shown, there might be different kinds of politicization where some may not even be supportive of democratization at all.

Krishna (2007: 192) has argued that the politicization of community interests is largely contingent upon "how communities are linked to their external environment and how their leaders interpret for them the impacts of external forces. Both incentives and leaders shape the use of social capital".[3] As Walzer (1998: 24) suggests, "civil society requires political agency". This catalytic agent could be an outsider or an insider to the community. This also could be expressed either through individual leadership or through organizational involvement. And the result of this involvement depends upon the nature of leadership (Ndegwa, 1996) and the ideology of organization. As mentioned earlier, the effects of social capital – democratic or antidemocratic – depend on how it is directed and what kind of interest it serves.

According to Krishna (2002: 439) "whether high social capital leads to high, low or no participation in democracy may also be affected by the nature and capacity of mediating agency". Alliband (1983) sees voluntary associations or non-governmental organizations (NGOs)[4] as the "catalysts of development" and democratization in India

[3] According to Varshney (2007), three factors are important in understanding the politicization of the masses – "the number of people affected by the policy, how organized those people are, and whether the effect is direct and immediate or indirect and over a long time horizon. The more people affected by a policy choice, the more organized they are, and the more direct the policy's effects, the more likely it is that a policy will generate mass concern" (see also Varshney, 2001).

[4] The term "NGO" was first coined by the United Nations Charter of 1945 mainly to indicate the difference between the sovereign nation-states, which are its direct members and the organizations that collaborate

(see also Riley, 2002; Eldridge, 1995).[5] This optimism is derived "from a general sense of NGOs as 'doing good' unencumbered and untainted by the politics of government or the greed of the market" (Fisher, 1997: 442). They are "idealized as organizations through which people help others for reason other than profit or politics" (*ibid.*). In a society that is characterized by widespread poverty (i.e. "capability deprivation")[6], illiteracy, corruption, clientilism and paternalistic bureaucracy, and where a vast majority of people suffer from a sense of powerlessness, NGOs can play important role in addressing not just the socio-economic problems of the people but also the structural and institutional deficiencies of that society. Acknowledging the fact that NGOs in India form a major part of its civil society; and play very important mediating roles in community development and democratization, this thesis aims to understand the politics of civil society and democratization in the tribal dominated Udaipur district in south Rajasthan.

The central question that is asked here is that is civil society a democratic force? Addressing this, it examines "how non-governmental organizations, as part of civil society, contribute to democratization in [Rajasthan] and what conditions facilitate or inhibit their contributions" (Ndegwa, 1996: 1). The thesis also closely examines how the politics of grassroots participation actually takes place and how issues of civil society become politicized and form a broader part of the public discourse. It asks, how does the "civil public" get transformed into a "political public"? In other words, this thesis seeks

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with or receive grants from its agencies to implement development programmes (see Sahoo, 2004: 1). In India, the term NGO itself is of fairly recent coinage. Earlier the common term was voluntary organizations or agencies, referring essentially to organizations registered under the Societies Registration Act of 1860 and equivalent legislation (Sheth and Sethi, 1991: 50). Both terms are used interchangeably in this thesis.

[5] Korten (1990) has noted that NGOs are the instruments for people's voluntary action capable of enhancing democracy, social justice, self-reliance, sustainability and the elimination of exploitation in development programmes.

[6] According to Amartya Sen (1999: 87) "poverty must be seen as the deprivation of basic capabilities rather than merely as lowness of incomes" (see also Nussbaum, 2000; Alkire, 2002).

to understand the nature of the relationship between civil society and state and their implications for democratization in the specific context of south Rajasthan.

1.2: Central Argument: The Primacy of Politics

The theorists of "third-wave" transitology have emphasized on civil society "institutions" as the indispensable instruments for the survival and sustenance of democracy. These institutions were thought as the "hitherto missing key" to be acquired by the developing countries to reach the Western stage of political development (Harbeson, 1994 cited in Comaroff and Comaroff, 1999: 2). As Dettke (1995: x) has declared, "the most important concept the West could offer the emerging democracies was the concept of civil society". Aid agencies and governments of the industrialized West viewed NGOs as the "magic bullet" that can positively address the different problems of the third world (Vivian, 1994; Edwards and Hulme, 1995). Development assistance was channeled to the developing countries for "building-institutions" of civil society such as NGOs, which can help promote democratic development and good governance (see Jenkins, 1999: 212; Carothers, 1999; Crook and Manor, 1995: 310; Li, 2007: 236; Moore, Stewart and Hudock, 1995; Diamond, 1992).

The thesis, by contrast, argues that all kinds of civil society institutions do not necessarily result in democratic political change. For example, as Hadiz (2003: 597) has shown in the context of Indonesia, the institutions of democratic politics and civil society are captured by predatory interests, whose economic and political agenda are often profoundly anti-liberal and anti-democratic (see also Rodan, 1996). Keeping this in mind, the thesis contends that although institutions play a role, they are neither the explanation

par excellence for outcomes nor the prescription for developmental problems (Sangmpam, 2007). What shapes institutions is the "practice of politics" (Li, 2007) and the "political" character of the institutions is not an accident[7] (see Ferguson, 1994; Tornquist, 1998; Harriss, 2002; Leftwich, 2005; Sangmpam, 2007). Institutional variations and outcomes in individual countries are an effect of society-rooted politics, which, in turn, is a result of the complex dynamics of relationship between classes (Sangmpam, 2007: 206).

Grounded on this theoretical framework, the thesis examines the politics of civil society in south Rajasthan. It demonstrates that the politics of civil society could be multifaceted and could have different implications for democratization. The comparative case studies of the three organizations reflect three different kinds of politics within civil society – liberal pluralist, neo-Marxist, and communitarian.

The liberal pluralist organization, which envisions the state as a "minimalist" organization, shares a co-operative relationship with the state. Its emphasis on community participation and technocratic service delivery approach has had "unintended consequences" (Foucault, 1979; Ferguson, 1994), i.e. the development of a culture of "organized dependency" at the grassroots level (Walder, 1983). The neo-Marxist organization has adopted a radical "claim-making" approach that emphasizes issue-based activism and welfare rights, which has often positively contributed to the marginalized people's struggle for rights and entitlements. And finally, the communitarians believe that increasing modernization has resulted in the progressive decline of values in society and, thus, there is the exigency to rebuild the community to regain its civility as well as to

[7] "Politics is a competition *within* society over property, goods, services, values ('social product') and – a crucial corollary – political power". "Political institutions…are not the state. Nevertheless, like political institutions, the state is an effect of politics as well" (Sangmpam, 2007: 203).

strengthen its moral values, virtues and bonds. But the communitarian's preoccupation with virtue and morality has threatened the civic and secular conception of nationhood that formed the foundation of post-colonial Indian state. The democratic effect of civil society is not a result of the "stock of social capital" in the community but is contingent upon the kinds of ideologies and interests that are present or ascendant not just within civil society but also within the state.

1.3: Rationale of Field Site Selection

In the 1990s, Rajasthan was one of the states that brought the "associational revolution" to India (see Salamon, 1994). Several organizations and people's movements emerged to work with marginalized people such as the tribals and peasants to improve their socio-economic status. Compared to other states of India, Rajasthan saw NGOs play a greater role not just in promoting the so-called participatory approach to development but also in pursuing several important people's struggles that later helped pass progressive legislations such as the Right to Information (RTI) Act, the Right to Food Act, the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA), the Scheduled Tribes (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, and several others.

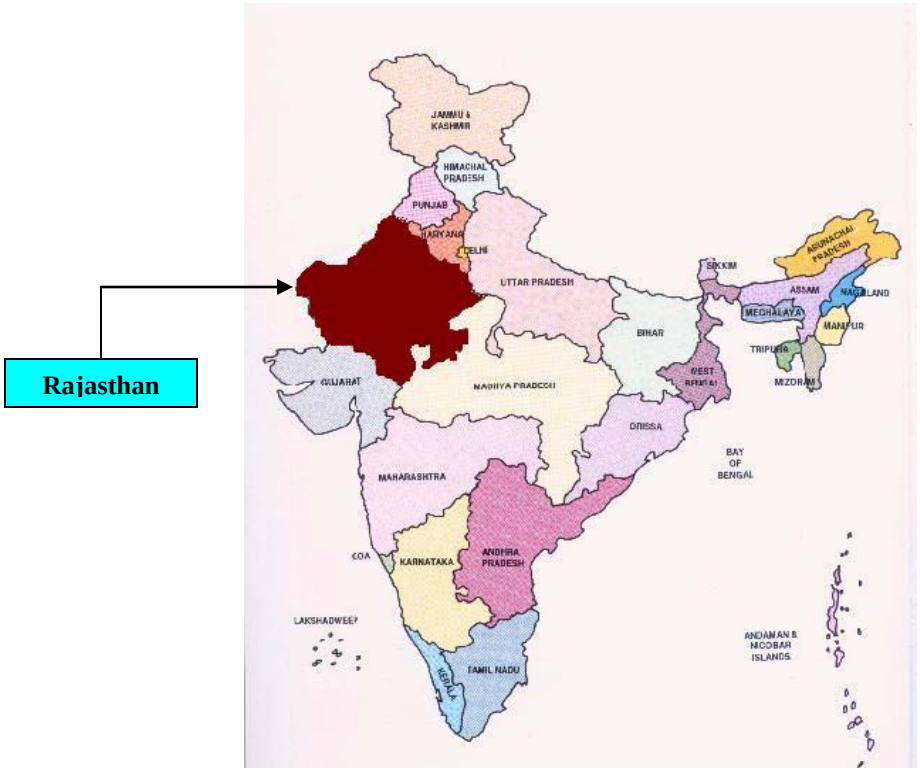
My interest in civil society and the NGOs in Rajasthan, especially in the tribal dominated southern regions, began during my Master's Programme at the University of Hyderabad (2000-02), where I first became exposed to the literature on NGOs and development in India. This also happened to be the time when the movement of Mazdoor Kishan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS), an organization of the poor peasants and labourers in south Rajasthan, had succeeded after almost 10 years of their struggle in passing the

Right to Information Act in the state. This Act provided every citizen the right to have access to government documents that were previously declared as “the state secret” and hence, not to be made public. By making the so called “secret” documents public, the people of Rajasthan were able to track the corrupt practices and inconsistencies in government and bureaucratic records.

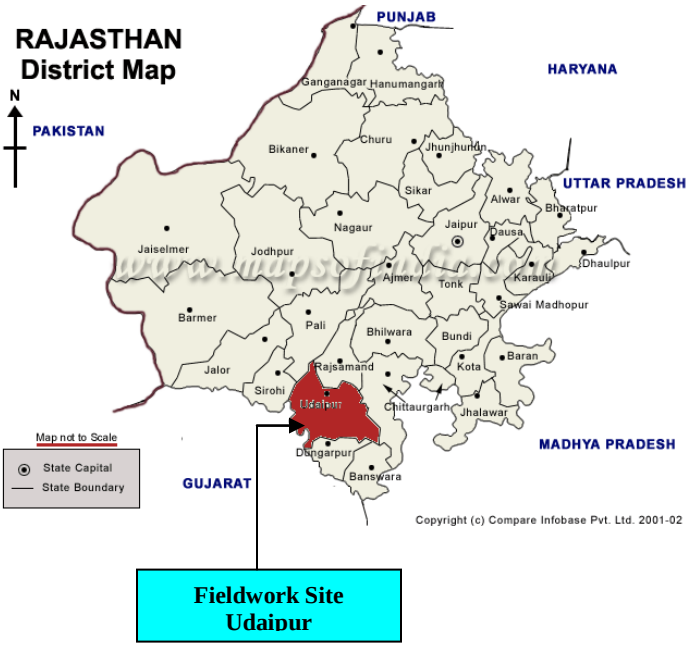
Following the success of RTI in Rajasthan, several of the provincial governments passed the law as a result of people’s pressure. The Government of India also enacted and implemented the Act in 2005. Not only the MKSS but also the struggles of several other NGOs that have worked with the poor and marginalized have significantly influenced the development and democratic discourse in Rajasthan. The question that always fascinated me was why this was possible in Rajasthan.

In 2002, I joined the M.Phil Programme in Sociology at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi, where my interest on civil society in Rajasthan grew stronger because of my association with a few good Rajasthani friends. But, due to limited time and departmental requirement for secondary study, I could not pursue my empirical research interest on Rajasthan at JNU. However, I wrote my M.Phil thesis on “State, NGOs and the Discourse of Development in India”, which was a “grand” critical narrative on the role of state and NGOs in development in India during the post-colonial period. After this, a four year Ph.D research scholarship from the National University of Singapore provided me the fitting opportunity and appropriate academic training and resources to pursue my initial research interest. I was very much interested to understand the dynamics of NGOs in the tribal dominated south Rajasthan, their relationship with the state, and their implications for sustainable development and democratization process.

MAPS OF INDIA AND RAJASTHAN



Source: www.koausa.org



Source: www.mapsofindia.com

Following this, fieldwork was carried out in southern Rajasthan's Udaipur district for several reasons (see Maps on page 9). First, Udaipur is predominantly tribal district: more than 47% of the population is tribal and some blocks like Kotra (commonly known as the *Kalapani*[8]), have tribal concentrations as high as 90% (Census, 2001). It is also "characterized by a combination of social conservatism and a high level of development interventions by various reform agents" (Kuhn, 1998: 9).

Secondly, given its "tribal" dominance[9], which is associated with "primitiveness", "wildness" and "marginality", different development activities are carried out as "civilizing" projects by various government agencies as well as non-governmental organizations (Mosse, 2005a: 48; Unnithan-Kumar, 1997: 3). People here are deeply affected by a combination of starvation, disease, malnutrition, and infant and maternal mortality. The land is rocky and agriculture depends on rainfall. In this situation, the state government provides employment to the rural poor in various kinds of relief work.

Thirdly, non-governmental organizations working on various developmental and democratic issues are very numerous in Udaipur (see Chapter 3). They help foster village associations autonomous of state control and exploitative patrons so as to facilitate a popular agenda of development from within the village community. Fourthly, the district's substantial tribal population has historically been subordinated to the hegemonic Rajputs. Their Rajput identity has been celebrated by the organizations of the Sangh Parivar to revive the Hindu (cultural) nationalism in Rajasthan (see Jenkins, 1998).

[8] *Kalapani* meaning "Black Water", a term for deep sea and hence exile. This expression was used during the colonial period to refer to the cellular jail in Andaman and Nicobar Islands (India) where most of the freedom fighters were sent as a part of solitary imprisonment. In a similar way, Kotra served as the "punishment posting" Block for government officials in Rajasthan.

[9] The "Bhil" tribes of India are perceived in contradictory terms – some see them as innocent, ignorant and hand-to-mouth people who are exploited by the traders and state officials, while others see them as uncultured, dangerous, liquor-drinking and wild people of the forest (Mosse, 2005a: 48).

Fifthly, Udaipur shares its border with Gujarat and is very close to Madhya Pradesh, which are considered prominent laboratories of Hindu nationalist activities. The tribal people living in the hilly terrain of Aravallis move to Gujarat during dry months. Sixthly, the district, previously a stronghold of the Indian National Congress (INC), came under the sway of the BJP in 2003. The BJP won 8 out of total 10 assembly segments in the district in the 2003 State Assembly Election (see Table 1.1). It was argued by several political commentators that the BJP managed to win in the tribal dominated regions because of the development activities carried out by "saffron outfits"[10] such as Vanvasi Kalyan Parishad (VKP), Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), Bajrang Dal, and others (Lodha, 2004; Mudgal, 2004; Mrug, 2004). With the return of the BJP to power in Rajasthan, the Sangh Parivar has accelerated its activities in the tribal dominated southern districts.

Table 1.1: Comparison of 1998 and 2003 Assembly Election Results in Udaipur District

Sl.	Constituency Name	1998 Assembly Election		2003 Assembly Election	
		Political Party	Winner's Name	Political Party	Winner's Name
1	Lasadia (ST)	INC	Nagraj	BJP	Gautam Lal
2	Vallabhnagar	INC	Gulab Singh	BJP	Randheer S. Bhinder
3	Mavli	INC	Shiv Singh	BJP	Shanti Lal Chaplot
4	Udaipur	INC	Trilok Poorbiya	BJP	Gulab C. Katariya
5	Udaipur Rural (ST)	INC	Khem Raj Katara	BJP	Vandana Meena
6	Salumber (ST)	INC	Roop Lal	BJP	Arjun Lal Meena
7	Sarada (ST)	INC	Raghuvir Singh	INC	Raghuveer S. Meena
8	Kherwara (ST)	INC	Daya Ram Parmar	BJP	Nana Lal Ahari
9	Phalasia (ST)	INC	Kuber Singh	BJP	Babu Lal Kharadi
10	Gogunda (ST)	INC	Mangi Lal	INC	Mangi Lal Garasiya

Source: http://www.mapsofindia.com/assemblypolls/rajasthan/phalasia-st.html; accessed on 29 September 2009.

[10] Saffron outfits usually refer to organizations of the Sangh Parivar or Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). Saffron colour, standing for courage, comes from the saffron flag, "a symbol of Hindu power deriving from the reign of Shivaji, an eighteenth-century Hindu prince who conducted a brief rebellion against the Muslim empire – to declare India a nation unified by a single culture and a holy land that is at the same time the motherland" (Nussbaum, 2007: 154-5).

Finally, it was in south Rajasthan especially in Dungarpur and Udaipur, where a group of communist revolutionaries, inspired by the Naxalite movement of 1967, launched their struggle against the exploitative structure of feudalism[11] and mobilized the tribal population against economic, political and social tyranny (Swaminadhan, 1997).

Udaipur was chosen as the fieldwork site because it provided a unique interface between the state and different kinds of civil society groups. There is not only a strong presence of the state (through its relief programmes) and service delivery NGOs but also a strong presence of organizations from Left and Right political orientations.

Taking ideological and political orientations into account, three prominent and well-established NGOs from the district were selected for the study: (1) Seva Mandir – a Gandhian NGO that focuses on service delivery and project implementation, (2) Astha – an NGO that represents a unique mix of Left and Gandhian ideology and is involved in a variety of indigenous people's movement, and (3) Rajasthan Vanvasi Kalyan Parishad (RVKP) – a Right-wing Hindu nationalist organization affiliated to the RSS that emphasizes the importance of religion, community and culture in the public sphere.

1.4: Research Methodology: Comparative Case Study

How does civil society become mobilized? How do people participate in the politics of civil society? And, what are its implications for the state and democracy? In order to

[11] There were five major state patterns of feudalism in Rajasthan, namely Udaipur (Mewar), Jaipur, Jodhpur (Marwar), Bikaner and Kota. The chief of the state was a king called "Maharana" in Mewar, "Maharaja" in Jaipur, Jodhpur and Bikaner, and "Maharao" in Kota. In Mewar, the Maharana's secretariat was called the *Mahakma-Khas*. The state was divided into a number of districts, each being headed by a Jagirdar. The villagers were grouped into three categories: Khalsa, Jagir and Bhom. Khalsa and Bhom were directly administered by Maharana and Jagirdars ruled over the Jagir villages. In Rajasthan, there were 16,573 Khalsa villages and 18,075 Non-Khalsa villages; of which, in Udaipur there were 605 Khalsa villages and 2511 Non-Khalsa villages (Sharma, 1993: 10-11).

answer these questions, a "comparative case study" approach is employed, which heavily draws on from the literature in development sociology, political science and comparative politics, and sociology (see Shi, 2008; George and Bennett, 2005). This method is followed because the thesis demanded a holistic understanding about the role of NGOs and their implications for democratization in Rajasthan.

It is in this regard, the case study method was adopted because of its "ability to deal with a full variety of evidence – documents, artifacts, interviews, and observations" (Yin, 1989: 20). According to Orum, Feagin and Sjoberg (1991: 2), the case study is "an in-depth, multifaceted investigation, using qualitative research methods, of a single social phenomenon". Similarly, Yin (1989: 23) has also described the case study as a strategy for doing empirical research which involves investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence.

Despite the wider use of the case study method across disciplines, the "terminology pertaining to 'case studies' is frequently confusing" (Kaarbo and Beasley, 1999: 372). For example, as Brewer (2002) has argued, "case analysis can be a single person, a group, a critical event or community that in some way exemplifies or illustrates the phenomena under study" (cited in Wong, 2007: 56). Ragin (1992: 1) has similarly argued that the term "case" and the various terms linked to the idea of case analysis are not well defined in the social scientific discourse. Therefore, he urges that "[w]e need to strive for greater clarity in what we mean by 'case' and differentiate its various meanings" (*ibid.*: 4). Keeping this in mind, three ideologically and politically different NGOs in Udaipur district, such as Seva Mandir, Astha Sansthan and Rajasthan Vanvasi Kalyan Parishad, are chosen as the cases for this research.

Political scientists have often equated comparative case study method with cross-national comparison (Kaarbo and Beasley, 1999: 371; Przeworski and Teune, 1973). However, as Pierce (2008: 55) has argued, "the underlying principle of comparative research is that, by comparing two or more cases researchers can identify causal variables which could not be deduced from a single case". I have adopted the comparative approach to understand the "historical significance" and explore the "patterns of similarities and differences" across the above mentioned three cases and examine their role in advancing or endangering democratization in Rajasthan (see Ragin, 1994: 108-9).

Following an extensive survey of literature, my thesis proposal (before conducting fieldwork) originally hypothesized that civil society in India in general and Rajasthan in particular is largely dominated by two kinds of organizations: (1) those working on issues related to development, empowerment and rights, and (2) those related to identity, religion and culture. The proposal essentially assumed that the former has successfully expanded the democratic space, while the latter, on the contrary, has not only constrained but often reversed certain democratic developments.

In order to examine this hypothesis, two organizations that had long and decisive presence in the tribal dominated Udaipur district were selected for the study. The first organization named Seva Mandir was established in 1966 by Dr. Mohan Singh Mehta, a liberal humanist, "upon the idea of contributing to the cause of poverty alleviation by creating a more socially just society" (*Comprehensive Plan*, 1990-93: 1), while the second one named the Rajasthan Vanvasi Kalyan Parishad was established in 1978 by the RSS to promote militant Hindu nationalist ideology in Rajasthan. Broadly, the initial objective of this thesis was to corroborate the above mentioned hypothesis.

However, halfway through my fieldwork with Seva Mandir and the RVKP, I discovered that my original hypothesis was partly false. Although my initial assumptions about the RVKP as an organization constraining and often reverting certain democratic developments was proven right, the assumptions about Seva Mandir as an organization expanding the democratic space had to be modified. The important question was how can we then explain democratic political change in Rajasthan?

During my fieldwork in the tribal villages in Kotra and Jhadol blocks of Udaipur district, I had come across another organization named Astha Sansthan, which was established in 1986 by a group of Left oriented activists who had quit Seva Mandir to pursue a more radical and "claim-making" approach to rural development. Astha's approach to development was different from that of Seva Mandir and the RVKP.

Instead of carrying out any kind of service delivery, Astha spent most of its time and resources to mobilize people in relation to the institutions of state on issues that affected the tribal society. It was observed that such mobilization of the marginalized has had deep implications for development and democratization in Rajasthan. Taking this into account, it was believed that inclusion of Astha Sansthan, because of its unique ideology and approach, will give an analytical edge to this comparative study in understanding the dynamics of development and democratization in Rajasthan.

Access to Seva Mandir and Astha was comparatively easier than to the RVKP. The President of Seva Mandir, Mr. Ajay Mehta, was very cordial and encouraging, and permitted me to conduct research on the organization. My fieldwork in Kotra tribal region, where all these three organizations have their branches, made me a familiar face even to the other functioning organizations. I attended Astha's *Milan Mela* programme in

Kotra, where I was introduced to its several activists. My later decision to include Astha in the study, however, was welcomed by R.D. Vyas, Ashwani Paliwal and Ginny Shrivastava, the founding members of the organization.

In contrast, access to the RVKP was more difficult. They suspected me of being a journalist who might write badly about their organization. They were also suspicious about the mentioning of the word "political" in my previous thesis title (*The Dynamics of Mobilization and the Politics of Democratization: Exploring the "Political" Role of Civil Society in Rajasthan*) and refused initially to cooperate with the study since they claimed to be only a "voluntary organization" not involved in any kind of "political" activities.

My eventual access to the RVKP was greatly facilitated by my early-adolescent affiliation with the RSS *Shakhas* (branches), on which the RVKP activists interrogated me, and my ability to remember the first few lines of its prayer helped immensely. More generally, my access to all these organizations and the people was facilitated and framed by: (1) my identity as a "halfie"– an Indian who is studying abroad[12]; (2) being foreign to the state especially being an Oriya (although I'm still not clear why); (3) my digital camera with which I could take pictures and show them instantly; (4) my ability to understand and speak Hindi; and (5) the belief on the part of the people in the rural community that my "report" would help bring development projects to their locality.

The fieldwork for this research was conducted in two phases during September 2006 – February 2007 and June 2008. As all the three NGOs have been based in Udaipur and have been working in the tribal communities there, it was very fitting for me to work with all three of them at the same time. Although the fieldwork initially was very

[12] Kirin Narayan (who coined the term in 1989) and Abu-Lughod (1991) describe 'halfies' as people whose national or cultural identity is mixed by virtue of migration, overseas education or parentage.

intensive and agonizing because of my first time work in the tribal region, it provided me with highly informative qualitative data on the role and dynamics of NGOs in tribal development in Rajasthan.

Analysis and arguments in this thesis were built upon the information collected from secondary sources and the insights gained during my numerous interactions with different groups of people and officials in the region during the total seven months long fieldwork. For the historical background and parts of the contemporary and comparative analysis, I relied on the secondary information and archival research. The existing literature was reviewed and re-evaluated to understand the nature of the state and civil society over different historical periods in Rajasthan in particular and India in general. The historical dimension also analyzed the socio-political conditions responsible for the rise and development of civil society, and the nature of the state and its policies in different historical periods. It looked at various government records, development reports, newspapers, books, journal articles, internet, and other informative sources.

I also conducted documentary research in the libraries of these three NGOs and accessed their annual reports, project documents, pamphlets, newsletters, magazines and other written documents. These documents provided clear historical understanding about their experiences and evolution over the years. They also informed me about their objectives, strategies and policies. It should be noted however that the thesis did not, as can be seen in the following chapters, blindly follow these documents or the organizational claims.

The information and claims in these reports were verified with the clients, community leaders, committee members, and officials at the block and village council

level. These groups of people provided more contextualized details, some of which often contradicted the claims of these NGOs. Even some of the current and ex-staff members of these organizations provided critical perspectives on their functioning. Internet sources and several published academic and journalistic documents such as books, articles, and newspaper reports also provided vital information and critical perspectives about the activities of these organizations, which immensely helped build the arguments.[13]

In addition, I also traveled to the tribal villages in Kotra and Jhadol blocks of Udaipur district where Seva Mandir, Astha and the RVKP have been working for long time. I visited their worksites, observed their activities, witnessed their implemented programmes, participated in their committee meetings and awareness campaigns, and interacted with numerous ordinary villagers – both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries as well as village leaders. The community-level information was immensely effective in analyzing the implications of these organizations at the grassroots level. A range of qualitative methods such as in-depth interview, informal discussion and detailed observation were employed to collect primary information in the field. I also maintained an everyday field diary, which contained notes on my daily activities, conversations with people, my feelings, and the important observations and experiences during my visit to the various field settings. This diary proved immensely useful in identifying key themes and building arguments for the thesis.

Besides my numerous informal interactions and discussions with ordinary people in the villages, I also conducted around 100 semi-structured interviews for this research.

[13] Although available literature on these organizations were very little, it was however observed that there were comparatively more number of academic works on Seva Mandir than on Astha Sansthan or the RVKP. The reasons for this could be because of the historical role played by Seva Mandir in tribal development in Rajasthan as well as the involvement of the Mehta family in it.

It is because this interview technique "gave greater freedom for respondents to answer questions. It also allowed them to answer more of their own terms and raise issues which might have been overlooked in interview schedule" (Wong, 2007: 62). I have used both real and symbolic names of informants in this thesis. It is largely to hide the identity of some of those staffs and activists who provided information that contradicted some of the claims made by these organizations.

Discussions with the informants usually centred on specific themes and they were given the freedom to narrate their views on the theme. It should be noted however that these themes, as elaborated below, varied across informants depending on their background, position and social characteristics (Wong, 2007: 63). While some of these interviews were conducted in formal settings like the government and NGO offices and were recorded with the permission of the informants, others were conducted in very informal settings in the villages and remained unrecorded. In case of the latter, I noted down the important points of our conversation and elaborated them when I returned home in the evening. The time durations of these interviews usually ranged from 30 minutes to 2 hours depending on the informant's schedule and his ability to explain issues.

Who were the informants? (see Table 1.2). The first kind of informants were state officials, bureaucrats and elected people's representatives. Interviews with them were conducted in their offices and largely focused on themes like the various developmental problems in the region, their role in tribal development, their perception and evaluation of NGO activities especially of Seva Mandir, Astha and the RVKP, and so on. This discussion provided an idea about the responses of the state and its agencies to people's problems, the various government policies and development programmes for the tribals,

the state-NGO-political party relationship in Udaipur, and official perception on people's mobilization and the functioning of various intermediate organizations.

Table 1.2: Categories of Informants in Interviews[14]

Categories of Informants	Roles	Information gathered
State Officials, Bureaucrats, and Elected People's Representatives	Implementation of State/ Government Policy	Role and policies of state in tribal development; state-NGOs-political party relationship; official perception on NGOs and people's movements.
Staffs, Volunteers, and Members of NGOs	Implementation of Development Programmes	History, growth trajectory, organizational structure, plans, programmes, strategies, and funding of the NGOs; NGOs relationship with the state and political parties.
Ordinary Villagers and Community Leaders	Beneficiaries of Development	Rural poverty and social structure; role played by state, NGOs, political parties and village council (*panchayat*) in development; dynamics of electoral politics; and the politics of people's movements.
Journalists, Activists, and Academics	Critical Intellectuals of Society	Broader political climate and social structure in Udaipur; history of people's movement and NGO growth; role of media and middle class; state-NGO-political party relationship and their implications for democratization in Udaipur.

The second kind of informants were the staff members and volunteers of Seva Mandir, Astha, and the RVKP. Open-ended interviews were conducted with them on themes related to the organizations' structure, history, growth trajectory, funding opportunities, constraints, relationship with the state, political parties and other NGOs in the locality, and also about their plans, programmes, strategies and efforts in working with various groups of people in Udaipur. They provided comprehensive insights on the roles played and issues addressed by their organizations pertaining to tribal development and also on how they mobilized/organized people and for what purposes. Some current and ex-staff

[14] The structure of this table is influenced by Wong's (2007: 64) identification of 8 different key players in migrant communities in Hong Kong.

members provided, as mentioned earlier, critical perspectives on the functioning of these organizations and also about changes in their strategies and priorities over the years.

The third kind of informants were the ordinary people in the village, the community leaders, and the beneficiaries of these organizations and their activities. Discussions with them involved issues related to rural poverty, development, socio-economic and religious structures in the village, role of the government, the NGOs and the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in tribal development, the dynamics of electoral politics at the local level, and so on. Besides offering useful information on these themes, people's experiences also provided vital insights on why people get organized, and under what socio-political compulsions and conditions they do so. In other words, it offered some idea about how issues in civil society become "public" and "political"; how a "civil public" gets transformed into a "political public".

And finally, some interviews and discussions were conducted with local journalists, academics and activists. Their insights were helpful in understanding the broader political climate and social structure in Udaipur, history of people's movements and NGO growth in the region, the role of media and the middle class in society, and the NGO-state-political party relationship and its implications for democratization and development in Rajasthan.

1.5: Outline of Chapters

This thesis is organized into seven chapters. Following this brief introduction, Chapter 2, "Civil Society and Democratization: Conceptual and Theoretical Perspectives", analyzes the existing literature and outlines the conceptual and theoretical perspectives on civil

society, state and democratization. It argues that neither the primacy of civil society approach nor the predominance of state approach is adequate to understand democratization. Democratization is not a one-way process; it is contingent on the social and political relationships and the interface between state and civil society.

Chapter 3, "State and Civil Society in India: A Socio-Historical Analysis", provides a socio-historical analysis of the state and civil society in India. It argues that, in India, the nature of civil society is diverse and several factors have been responsible for its development. For example, in colonial period, it was national sentiment and anti-colonial struggle; in early post-colonial period, the hegemonic discourse of development and rural reconstruction; in the 1970s, the "failure of the state" and the imposition of Emergency rule; and in the 1990s, the flexible and favourable policies of the state as well as the growing international development aid that led to the growth of civil society organizations in India. Today, the sphere of civil society in India is largely dominated by middle class NGOs; and the relationship between state and civil society is marked both by cooperation and conflict.

Chapter 4, "Seva Mandir and 'Constructive' Social Development", examines the role of Seva Mandir, one of the oldest and best-known NGOs in Rajasthan. It argues that although Seva Mandir has played a hegemonic role in tribal development, its project implementation and service delivery approach has had unintended consequences resulting in a culture of "organized dependency" at the grassroots level that has often adversely affected its larger objectives of empowerment and democratization.

Chapter 5, "Astha Sansthan and Welfare Rights Activism", analyzes the role of Astha in mobilizing the tribal populations of south Rajasthan for welfare rights. It argues

that the "claim-making" and issue-based mobilization approach as adopted by Astha has radicalized everyday politics and challenged exploitative structures at the grassroots level. This approach of Astha, as compared to other organizational approaches, has contributed more directly to the formation of democratizing civil society in Rajasthan.

Chapter 6, "Rajasthan Vanvasi Kalyan Parishad and the Cultural Politics of Development", examines the role of the RVKP, a Hindutva-oriented organization. It argues that by utilizing development and social services as an entry point, the RVKP has been able to spread the exclusivist ideology of Hindutva among the tribals as well as to gain their electoral support for the BJP in Rajasthan. Furthermore, it has instigated the tribals against the Muslims and the Christians who are portrayed not just as local exploiters and proselytizers but also as aliens and anti-nationals. Such sectarian politics of the RVKP has posed a challenge to both liberal and democratic values in the Indian Constitution and "saffronized" both the institutions of state and civil society in Rajasthan.

Chapter 7, "Conclusion", summarizes the arguments and findings of the study. It argues that the democratic effect of civil society is not a result of the "stock of social capital" in the community but is contingent upon the kinds of ideologies and interests that are present or ascendant not just within civil society but also within the state. Civil society can have contradictory consequences in relations to democratization. One cannot theoretically determine if civil society is democratic; it can only be empirically examined.

1.6: Significance of the Study

Despite a wave of research, a great deal of disagreement remains over the conceptual understanding of civil society and its implications for the modern state and democracy.

Indeed, there exist seemingly contradictory theories about the role of civil society. Neo-Tocquevillians like Putnam (1993), Diamond, Linz and Lipset (1988), Fukuyama (1995) and others support the view that a vigorous civil society strengthens democratic governments. While Kwon (2004), Chambers and Kopstein (2001), Kopecky and Mudde (2003), Whitehead (1997), and many others present convincing evidence about the potential of civil society groups to endanger democracy and institutional performance. Contrary to such perceptions, this study demonstrates that the relationship between civil society and democratization is a complex, contingent process, dependent on a number of factors such as specific ideolologies and interests.

Secondly, with the "third-wave" of democratization it was assumed by the industrial West that the promotion of civil society "institutions" will deepen democracy in the third world (see Huntington, 1992; Diamond 1999; Carothers, 1999). However, the three cases studies in the thesis defy such simplistic assumptions and argue that although institutions play a role, they are neither the explanation *par excellence* for outcomes nor the prescription for developmental problems (Sangmpam, 2007). What determines development and democracy in these countries is not the false "primacy of institutions" but the distribution and disposition of political power in society or the "primacy of politics" (see Ferguson, 1994; Tornquist, 1998; Thorlind, 2000; Harriss, 2002, 2006; Khan, 2004; Leftwich, 2005; Berman 1997; 2006). It thus urges to understand the political dynamics while explaining democratic change in the third world.

Thirdly, as Jayaram (2005) declares, the major weakness of civil society discourse today is its excessive theorization and lack of empirical research. This research, however, provides an empirical examination of the actual operation and effects of civil society in

India in general and Rajasthan in particular. It shows that one cannot theoretically determine if civil society is democratic; its implications can only be empirically examined.

Fourthly, since Hegel, most of the literature on civil society follows the modernist view of denying the traditional primordial organizations a place within the domain of civil society. Ethnic, caste and religious organizations were placed outside the domain of civil society. According to this view civil society refers only to those intermediary organizations that are secular and open. The most prominent proponents of this view in India are Beteille (1999), Kaviraj (2001), Chatterjee (1998a), Mahajan (1999a), Gupta (1997a), Chhibber (1999) and others. This thesis disagrees with them and argues that such perspective restricts the scope of civil society only to democratic institutions and excludes the primordial and non-secular institutions. Civil society is very diverse in nature and includes all kinds of associations – civil and uncivil, legal and illegal, traditional and modern, and primordial and voluntary – which could have different implications for the functioning of state, society, and democracy (Rudolph, 2003; Jenkins, 2005).

Finally, the case of the RVKP has blurred the boundaries between the sacred and the secular. It demonstrates that development is not a secular process; it is often clouded with religious values and identities (see Linden, 2008). Religious organizations use developmental values as vectors for propagating "sacred" ones. Religion is thus no longer isolated from the life-world of individuals but has become an integral part of it.

2

CIVIL SOCIETY AND DEMOCRATIZATION: CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

2.1: Introduction

Indian democracy defies easy classification and presents a unique challenge to students of political sociology as well as comparative politics. While India is a long-established democracy, aspects of the academic debates on "democratization" can be appropriately applied to it. However, what fundamentally distinguishes Indian democratization from so-called "third wave" of democratization[1] cases in Latin America and Eastern Europe is that there is no transition involved from a previously authoritarian or totalitarian regime to a democratic one.

In the "third wave" cases, the process of transition to democracy is said to have occurred either as a result of pacts among elites or pressures from civil society, or some interplay between the two. According to the transition theorists, democratic transitions involve four fundamental "sequence" of processes: (1) the demise of non-democratic regimes (authoritarian break-down), (2) the establishment of procedural minimum of democracy (democratic transition), (3) democratic deepening and consolidation, and (4) the maturing of democratic political order (see Shin, 1994: 10; Kim, 2000: 11; Vanhanen, 1992: 165). It should be noted, however, that scholars such as Carothers (2007) have

[1] Since 1974 the numbers of democratic political systems have increased more than three times – from 39 to 120 as by January 2000. Today there exist 117 democracies in the World (Shin, 1994; Diamond, 2000).

criticized such sequencialism for the uncritical labeling of countries as "democracies" in a very large number of cases where democratization actually remains highly problematic.

Given the long history of democratic institutionalization in India, the above mentioned conception of "linear" stages cannot address the distinctiveness of Indian democratization (Heller, 2000: 484). The thesis goes beyond the theory of democratic transition, which tends to be limited to the procedural minimum in its understanding of the evolution of democracy. It attempts to sociologically explain the Indian case through what Giddens (2000) calls the "democratization of democracy"[2]. This entails the ascendance of an agenda of broad empowerment so that merely procedural democracy transforms into a more substantive form of democracy, in which political participation is more meaningful, especially on the part of marginalized groups in society, and in which human rights are protected and not just codified (see Huber and Stephens, 1999).

More significantly, the thesis also attempts to go beyond the limitations of the framework that suggests that the rise of civil society is more or less associated with the rise of democracy as a matter of course (Putnam, 1993; Diamond, 1999). It follows the argument that not all kinds of civil society institutions necessarily promote democratic political change (White, 1996; Berman, 1997; Tornquist, 1998). According to such a view, civil society is inherently diverse in nature and historically specific in its composition and, therefore, can have different implications for democratization.

Following a review of the literature, this chapter classifies civil society organizations into three categories based on their political and ideological orientations –

[2] By this Giddens (2000) means, "effective devolution of power; effective anti-corruption measures at all levels; constitutional reforms; promotion of greater transparency in political affairs; and bring political decision-making close to the everyday concerns of citizens".

liberal pluralist, neo-Marxist, and communitarian; and further argues that neither the primacy of civil society approach nor the predominance of the state approach is adequate to understand the democratization process (Keane, 1988; Walzer, 1992; Grugel, 2002). The thesis as a whole also adopts the view that democratization is contingent on the social and political relationships and the interface between state and civil society, and will proceed to empirically examine the historically specific nature of this interface in the case of modern India. The theoretical approach employed emphasizes the reciprocal constitution of a strong facilitating state and strong civil society for democratization.

2.2: Democracy and Democratization

Democracy as a "political method" or modern form of government emerges when all the adult citizens of a country participate in free and fair elections to elect their political representatives (Pateman, 1996: 7). As mentioned, the theory of democratic transition defines democracy largely on the basis of minimum procedures, which is best expressed in Dahl's (1971) eight "institutional" requirements: (1) the freedom to form and join organizations, (2) freedom of expression, (3) right to vote, (4) eligibility for public office, (5) right of political leaders to compete for support and votes, (6) alternative sources of information, (7) free and fair elections, and (8) institutions for making government policies depend on votes and other expressions of preference.

The fulfillment of these procedures, however, does not guarantee equality and distribution of power or material resources in society. As Kohli (2003) has rightly argued, "democracy as a form of government has no direct and necessary bearing on a more egalitarian distribution of wealth and status in society, i.e. a democratic government does

not necessarily facilitate socio-economic democracy". This is the case because in spite of the possession of formal rights, marginalized groups in society may not have an effective presence in the political process. The case of India is highly suggestive of this type of scenario.

With the end of colonial rule and the establishment of the Constitution on 26 January 1950, India adopted a democratic form of government. There have been relatively free and fair elections since then – with the exception of a period of Emergency rule under Indira Gandhi between 25 June 1975 and 21 March 1977 – where people have been able to elect their representatives freely. But procedural democracy has still not been successful in bringing all sections of society to participate in the political process in an effective manner to safeguard their social, economic, and cultural interests.

Jayal (2001a) has argued that the many social and economic inequalities in India make it difficult for formal participation to be effective. Chatterjee (1998a) has also argued that the modern idea of (citizenship) rights has not been extended to many of the marginalized sections of Indian society. As a result of this, Heller (2000: 485) notes that "there are degrees of democracy or, as Guillermo O'Donnell has put it, differences in the intensity of citizenship" within the Indian nation-state.

The bigger question then is whether economically developing democratic societies like India can undergo a process of substantive democratization. Furthermore, what kind of civil society would promote or inhibit this process? Though with reference mainly to the advanced Western capitalist societies, David Held notes that "further democratization is still possible through additional liberalization where formal political rights and liberties of all citizens are secured; and through political participation in

government and public institutions" (cited in Sorensen, 1998: 14).[3] The thesis applies this assertion in relation to India, where it is arguably even more pertinent.

In other words, the thesis analyzes the case of "Indian democratization" as a possible transition from a procedural form of democracy to a more inclusive system of governance where the rights of the economically marginalized, in particular, are safeguarded. So rather than a breakdown in authoritarianism, democratization in India would imply what Rueschemeyer, Stephens and Stephens (1992: 5) have called "an increase in political equality" and what Grugel (1999) has called the creation, extension and practice of social citizenship throughout a particular national territory.[4] Luckham and White (1996: 277) also have noted that "the politics of democratization is not merely a struggle for democracy, but also about the very nature of democracy itself".

Following the above theorists, the thesis defines democratization as a more inclusive *political* process where people are: (1) encouraged to actively participate in promoting the ideals of democracy such as equality, pluralism, representation and participation; (2) mobilized to redress the oppressive social structure and imbalance of power relationship; (3) claiming freedom and welfare rights from the state; and (4) demanding accountability and questioning the legitimacy of the state where necessary. Thus, "democratization is best understood as a complex, long-term, dynamic and open-ended process and consists of a progress towards more rule-based, more consensual and more participatory type of politics" (Whitehead, 2002: 27).

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[3] Beetham (1993: 55) also argues that "democratization expressed both a clear direction of change along the spectrum, and a political movement or processes of change, which can apply to any given system, not only change from authoritarian or dictatorial forms of rule".

[4]The existence of formal democratic institutions, while necessary, is not enough for democracy to exist. Democracy also requires popular consent, popular participation, accountability and a practice of rights, tolerance and pluralism. Democracy involves not only the elimination of authoritarian institutions, but also the elimination of authoritarian social practices (Grugel, 1999).

2.3: Theoretical Perspectives on Democratization

What creates the conditions for the establishment of democracy and for its deepening? A review of the literature suggests that there are three basic approaches in defining these conditions: (1) the modernization approach, (2) the structural-historical approach, and (3) democratic transition approach.

The modernization approach is associated with Lipset (1959) and Huntington (1992) who argue that capitalism is an important, if not indispensable, catalyst to democratization. According to them, capitalist development is at the heart of democracy because it is associated with the rise of a strong educated, middle class that plays an important role in the democratization of society. The spread of modernity expressed through wealth and education results in increased secularism and a diminution in ascriptive and primordial identities which are directly related to democratic change.

Lipset (1959: 38) has argued that "the more well-to-do a nation, the greater the chances that it will sustain democracy". He discarded the role of upper and lower class as pro-democratic since they pose a threat to each other; and found the middle class as pro-democratic because "a large middle class plays a mitigating role in moderating conflict since it is able to reward moderate and democratic parties and penalize extremist groups" (*ibid.*: 40). Huntington (1992: 287) has similarly argued that the "third wave" of democratization is a result of economic development, which led to the expansion of middle class and created "new sources of wealth and power outside the state and a functional need to devolve decision-making". It also increased the level of education of the people which developed trust and competence among the people that seemed favorable for the spread of democracy.

This approach "implicitly links democratization with globalization" (Grugel, 2002: 46). It presumes a direct correlation between capitalism and democracy and undermines the role of "politics". O'Donnell's (1973) influential theory of "bureaucratic authoritarianism" has long defied this thesis and showed in the Latin American context that economic development and expansion of capitalism does not result only in democracies but in dictatorships where the powerful bourgeoisie uses state power to increase profit through repression.

Robison, Hewison and Rodan (1993) have also made the same observation in relation to Southeast Asian cases, and Robison and Goodman (1996) in relation to Asia more broadly. According to these scholars, it is too simplistic to assume economic growth leading to democracy; instead, they suggest that in order to explain political change, it is important to understand the "social structural" factors and the class dynamics within a society.

The structural approach thus emphasizes the role of class and its relationship with the state; and is associated with the works of Barrington Moore (1966), Therborn (1977), and Rueschemeyer, Stephens and Stephens (1992). According to them, the historical transformation of the state and the structure of class relations are important to understand political change in a society.

In his seminal work, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*, Moore (1966) has provided a brilliant structural-historical analysis of the roots of democracy and dictatorship in eight countries. To him, there are three routes through which these countries traveled to reach modernity: (1) a capitalist and parliamentary democracy, or the *liberal route*, growing out of "bourgeois revolutions" in England, France and the

United States; (2) a capitalist and *fascist route,* accompanied by nationalist and militarist "revolution from above" orchestrated initially by the semi-feudal elites in Germany and Japan; and (3) the *communist route,* having its "main but not exclusive origins among peasants" in Russia and China. He also mentioned a fourth route – Indian democracy that "experienced neither a bourgeois revolution, nor a conservative revolution from above, nor so far a communist one" (Moore 1966: 413-4).

By identifying three different routes to the modern world, Moore (1966: 418) recognized the bourgeoisie as the historical agents of democratization, and declared this through his inimitable phrase "no bourgeoisie, no democracy". By contrast, Therborn (1977) and Rueschemeyer, Stephens and Stephens (1992) have emphasized the role of working class in advancing democratization. According to Therborn (1977: 29-34), although development of capitalism has led to the rise in productivity and the simultaneous increase of exploitation, it has also resulted in the legal emancipation of the labour and the creation of a free labour market, which lay the foundation for a working-class movement not only for higher wages and better living condition but also for political democracy.

Similarly, Rueschemeyer, Stephens and Stephens (1992: 60) have argued that "those who have to benefit from democracy would promote it and those who have to loose would resist and try to roll it back". According to them, it is the bourgeoisie and the landed class who not only own capital and land but also own power; and it is the working class who are excluded from the structures of power; and struggles for the balance of power in society. They disagree with Barrington Moore's idea of the bourgeois being the democratic agent because, for them, "any class that is dominant both economically and

politically will not be eager to dilute its political power by democratization" (*ibid.*). Thus, as an opposition to the interests of the bourgeois and landlords, the working class emerged as "the most consistently pro-democratic force" (*ibid.*: 60-61).

However, due to their small size in late developing countries, they build alliances with the middle class to advance democracy. As the working and the middle classes gained unprecedented capacity for self-organization as a result of the development of capitalist mode of production; and as the ideological orientations of the middle class seemed similar with the working class, the middle class emerged as a significant ally of the working-class in building a broad pro-democratic coalition. However, evidences from India show that capitalist development and rise of the new middle class has, instead of producing a classical pattern of liberal hegemony (in which the ruling block actively elicits the consent of the subordinate classes), resulted in "middle class illiberalism" manifested through caste, religious and ethnic loyalties (Fernandes & Heller, 2006: 495).

The third approach, thus, emphasizes the role of institutions and of collective actors. According to this view, democratization is not a result of economic maturity; it is rather an outcome of collective *political* action and negotiation, which occur either as a result of agreement among the elites or as pressures from the society where the former is more top-down in its approach and the latter as more bottom-up (Grugel, 2002: 56-7).

By drawing on this perspective, the theorists of "transitology" have argued that regime transitions are not determined by structural factors, but shaped by what principal actors do as well as by when and how they do it (O'Donnell and Schmitter, 1986; Linz and Stepan, 1996; Doorenspleet, 2004: 310). To them, for example, the third wave of global democratization was primarily a result of political processes and choices of a

variety of actors such as independent organizations that played important roles in dismantling the bureaucratic authoritarian social structures and establishing political democracy in many parts of Eastern Europe, Latin America, Africa and Asia.

This actor-oriented approach, thus, rejected the assumption that democratic politics is "merely a 'superstructure' that grows out of socio-economic and cultural bases". Instead, it suggested that democratization is "a matter of political crafting", which can be "promoted in all sorts of places, even in culturally and structurally unfavorable circumstances" (Doorenspleet, 2004: 310). Following this, the leading countries of the industrial West, especially the U.S., and several international organizations designed aid policies to build institutions and promote democracy abroad (Diamond, 1992; Jenkins, 1999). For example, by the end of 1990s, the U.S. was spending more than USD 700 million a year of such aid to implement democracy programmes in approximately 100 countries in Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, sub-Saharan Africa, and Latin America, as well as many in Asia and the Middle East (Carothers, 1999: 331).

It is thus evident that if structural perspective devotes perhaps too much attention to the class dynamics, proponents of transitology may be conversely guilty of advancing an agency-oriented analysis with too little accounting for structural constraints on strategies and choices. Writing on local democracy in Indonesia, Hadiz (2008: 528) has urged to take into account not just the institutions but also "the underlying logic power that accounts for the way institutions…actually work". He is also right in suggesting that neither the "structuralist camp" can completely ignore the role of social actors nor the "actor-based analysis" can entirely disregard the structural or contextual dimension of the problem in their analyses of democratization (*ibid.*).

2.4: Ideological Underpinnings of Civil Society

Conceptions of civil society vary widely. Sjogren (2001) argues that actual civil societies are not shaped in the same way today as when the concept was first elaborated, and they function in other ways due to drastically different structural and cultural frameworks of society (see also Mamdani, 1996). Considering its historical trajectory, the usage of civil society can be divided into two broad periods: (1) the classical usage as understood by Hobbes and Locke; and (2) the modern usage since the time of Hegel.

2.4.1: The Classical Usage

Domain of Rights and Civility

The classical usage of civil society understood it as a sphere of individual rights and civility against the state of nature (Kumar, 1993; Chandhoke, 1995; Whitehead, 1997). As Hobbes and Locke argue, "political or civil society", a "civil state" emerged when individuals entered some forms of contract by which they agreed to subordinate their separate wills into a unified common will to ensure civility, recognize individual rights and maintain rule of law in contrast to the state of nature. It is a sphere of rights where men sign a contract and constitute a common public authority.[5]

Thus, for the contractarians, civil society as the antithesis of the dangerous state of nature is an artificial construct where "civil" tended to be conflated with the "political". For them, civil society is congruent with, and not opposed to political society.

[5] Since the natural state of human existence lacks rules and institutions that secure the freedom of right-bearing individuals, it represents an uncivil condition (Mahajan, 1999; Chandhoke, 1995; Sjogren, 2001).

Civil society and the state came together, but not as one against, or independent of, the other.[6]

2.4.2: The Modern Usage

The modern idea of civil society emerged in the Scottish and Continental Enlightenment of the 18th century. A host of political theorists, from Thomas Paine to Georg Hegel, developed the notion of civil society as a domain parallel to but separate from the state (Carothers and Barndt, 2000: 18; Comaroff and Comaroff, 1999: 4).

System of Needs

In contrast to the view of the contractarians, Hegel's civil society[7] was distinct from the "political state" and was derived not from man's fear of death but from his material needs (Whitehead, 1997: 97). He defined it as the domain of particularity between the patriarchal family and the universal state – the totality of material conditions of life – which harbors and balances tendencies of conflict and integration (see Mamdani, 1996: 14).[8] Civil society embodies its own thesis and antithesis – the synthesis being, of course, the state (Sjogren, 2001). For Hegel, the state represents the ultimate sphere of ethics, which intervenes and restricts the disrupting tendencies within civil society to ensure the

[6] For the contractarians it is the state of nature, *societas naturalis* that is natural; *societas civilis* is an artifact. Civil society was more or less direct translation of Cicero's *societas civilis* and Aristotle's *Koinonia politike* (see Chandhoke, 1995: 82-85; Kumar, 1993: 376).

[7] Hegel used the German word *burgerliche gesellschaft* or bourgeois society to refer to civil society. But for some scholars Hegel wrote about bourgeois society and not civil society since there is another term in German, *zivilgesellschaft* that corresponds much better to the specific sense conveyed by civil society in English (see Beteille, 2001: 288; Joas and Adloff, 2006: 103).

[8] The poor, who lack the material context for the realization of the self and for the recognition of rights, were excluded from enjoying the freedom of civil society. Given the absence of ethicality in modern society, Hegel argues, the selfish desire to satisfy needs creates conflicting interests which undermine the foundations of civil society. Thus, the state becomes the source of ultimate ethicality (Sjogren, 2001; Chandhoke, 1995, 2003b).

fulfillment of the universal interests of the state itself (*ibid.*).[9] Thus, Hegel's civil society was constituted of socio-economic as opposed to political relations; and essentially bourgeois – a sphere of atomized self-seeking individuals (Neocleous, 1995: 396).

Although Marx inherited the Hegelian perspective,[10] he subordinated the state to civil society. For him "civil society is the true source and theatre of all history" (cited in Comaroff and Comaroff, 1999: 8). He claimed it is not the state, which conditions civil society; but the social relations of power in civil society that determined the nature of the state. Unlike Hegel[11], Marx sees civil society from the standpoint of the struggles of the unprivileged and excluded.

For Marx, the state is basically a committee that presides over the interests of the dominant class – the bourgeoisie in the case of capitalist society; and, the civil sphere is not only the ground where one man's selfish interest meets another man's selfish interest, it is a domain of exploitation (Chandhoke, 1995: 134; Dhanagare, 2001: 169). Thus, Marx demands the abolition of the antithesis between political society (state) and civil society through the abolition of both (Roy, 1995: 2008).[12]

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[9] The question is how does the particularity of civil society get connected with the universality of the state? As Kumar (1993: 379) tells us, "the sphere of civil society contains not just economic but social and civic institutions with an impulse of citizenship. It includes not just the market, the system of production and exchange for the satisfaction of needs, but also classes and corporations concerned with social, religious, professional and recreational life. One of these classes is the bureaucracy, 'the universal class', the class that links the particularism of the civil society with the universality of the state. The other mediating devices are the whole range of public institutions, such as courts, welfare agencies and educational establishments, which are directly concerned with civic purposes. These non-economic institutions are not peripheral or minor aspects of civil society but central to its function in Hegel's political philosophy".

[10] Hegel started from the primacy of civil society and proceeded to subordinate it to the state. Such centrality of state as an institution somehow "above" civil society has been described by Gupta and Ferguson (2002) as the "verticality" and "encompassing" principles of the state. However, the civil society and state relationship as envisaged by Hegel was turned upside down by Marx.

[11] For Hegel, the poor are the non-members of civil society since their lack of property deprives them of the benefits of the sphere.

[12] For Marx, the abolition of state and civil society is to be achieved, as Roy (1995: 2008) tells us, by the introduction of unrestricted voting as means of the fullest extension of democracy, which he broadly equates with the transition to socialism.

Sphere of Hegemony

After a period of disuse the term, "civil society", was invigorated after World War II through the writings of Marxist theorist Antonio Gramsci who rescued Marxism from its economistic tendencies by granting some analytical and explanatory autonomy to social and cultural phenomena (Sjogren, 2001). In contradistinction to Marx, civil society in Gramsci does not belong to the economic "base", but to the "superstructure" which consists of all ideological and cultural relations. Civil society, for Gramsci, is indeed not to be found in the sphere of production or economic organization but in the state (see Kumar, 1993: 382; Chandhoke, 1995; Anderson, 1976; Femia, 2001).[13]

According to Gramsci, the state = political society plus civil society.[14] Political society is an arena of coercion or domination – police, prison, armed forces etc.; and civil society is the locus of formation of political consciousness or consent where the state operates to enforce invisible, intangible and subtle forms of power, through educational and cultural systems, mass media, and, specifically by the activities of "organic intellectuals". The hegemony of the ruling class is expressed through the "organic relations" between the two realms (see Kumar, 1993: 382; Anderson, 1976: 33-34; Chandhoke, 1995; Buttigieg, 1995). Thus, in underlining the non-coercive forces in civil society, Gramsci identifies civil society as a sphere of freedom where the capitalist state maintains its hegemony.

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[13] Bobbio (1988: 83) notes that "if it is true that civil society is, as Marx says, 'the focal point, the theatre of all history', does not this shift of meaning of civil society in Gramsci induce us to ask the question if, by any chance, he has not located 'the focal point, the theatre of all history', elsewhere?"

[14] According to Perry Anderson (1976: 26-34), Gramsci conceived civil society in three ways. The other two are: First, the state is the site of the armed domination or coercion and civil society is the arena of cultural direction or consensual hegemony. And, hegemony pertains to civil society, and civil society prevails over state. In the second model, he no longer ascribes to civil society a preponderance over the state, or a unilateral localization of hegemony to civil society. On the contrary, civil society is presented as in balance or equilibrium with the state, and hegemony is distributed between state – "political society" – and civil society, while itself being redefined to *combine* coercion and consent.

Realm of Associations and Social Capital

Liberal understandings of civil society reach an apogee in the form of the writings of Tocqueville, who was perhaps the first major theorist to present civil society as the indispensable counterpart to a stable and vital democracy.[15] For him, civil society, which is essentially the arena of private interest and economic activity, is similar to Marx's idea of civil society. But Tocqueville adds another dimension which he calls "political society" (Kumar, 1993: 381). Political society, says Tocqueville, constitutes "the art of association".[16] He argues that it is through political society that the potential excesses of the centralized state, especially in democratic societies, are controlled. Political society supplies "the independent eye of society" that exercises surveillance over its public life.

Neo-Tocquevillians such as Putnam (1993), Coleman (2000), Fukuyama (1995), and others have argued that voluntary social interaction produces high and generalized levels of trust and cooperation or "social capital", which is essential for democracy and social progress. Putnam (1993; 1995) writes that civil associations foster the "networks of civic engagement" in a community within which reciprocity is learned and enforced, trust is generated, and communication and patterns of collective action are facilitated (see also Foley and Edwards, 1996; Whitehead, 1997; Pye, 1999). This sense of solidarity and social network nurtured by a vigorous associational life strengthens the performance of

[15] Since the fall of the Berlin wall and the collapse of Soviet communism, democracy has been the dominant form of government which reflects the revival of Tocqueville and the gradual discrediting and sudden fall of Marx. As Martin Malia notes, "the eclipse of Tocqueville largely coincided with the rise of Marx" (cited in Plattner and Diamond, 2000: 7-8; see also Diamond, 2000: 413-18).

[16] Political society constitutes of two kinds of associations: (1) political associations such as local self-government, juries, parties and public opinion; and (2) civil associations such as churches, moral crusades, schools, literary and scientific societies, newspaper and publishers, professional and commercial organizations, organizations for leisure and recreation (Kumar, 1993: 381).

democratic polity and the economy (see Uphoff, 2000; Narayan and Pritchett, 2000; Krishna, 2002).[17]

Arena of Public Sphere

Jurgen Habermas's public sphere belongs to the same theoretical family of civil society (Rudolph and Rudolph, 2003: 2). It is conceived as a sphere where private people transcending their private preoccupations come together as public and form an interactive body of citizens[18] engaged in rational-critical discourse addressing common purposes (see Habermas, 1989; Calhoun, 1992; Cohen and Arato, 1995; Chandhoke, 1995). Their communication was marked by rationality, by disinterestedness, by irrelevance of inherited identities to their deliberation, and by rigorous separation of private and public spheres (Rudolph and Rudolph, 2003: 3).

The core ideas that shape Habermasian public sphere are the development of the notion of "public opinion" which is the outcome of "the deliberated, reflective consideration of the bourgeois educated persons" as opposed to "mere opinion" which consists of "'things taken for granted, normative convictions', and 'collective prejudices'" (Rudolph and Rudolph, 2003: 4). In its role as the "public sphere", civil society becomes the arena for argument and deliberation as well as for association and institutional collaboration, and the extent to which such spaces thrive is crucial to the health of a democracy (Edwards, 2005: 55).

[17] Criticizing Putnam, Kwon (2004) shows us how rich associational life resulted in the establishment of Fascism in Italy. For him, associations do not necessarily contribute to the stabilization of democracy; their effects on democracy depend upon the larger political and ideological context (see also Berman 1997; Harriss, 2002; Chambers and Kopstein, 2001; Ben Fine, 2001; Foley and Edwards, 1996).

[18] Habermasian public sphere presents a catalogue of fundamental rights in defense of the public sphere (freedom of speech, opinion, press, assembly, association, etc.) and the intimate sphere (inviolability of person and residence, etc.) (see Cohen and Arato, 1995: 227).

2.5: Civil Society: Community or Association?

The distinction between community and association are central categories in sociology. Civil society as a "non-state sphere", argues Kaviraj (2001: 319), can mean two different things: (i) *all* social organizations apart from the state which include both *gesellschaft* and *gemeinschaft*; (ii) *only* social organizations of *gesellschaft* type.

For classical theorists such as Hobbes and Locke, civil society is conceptualized as an artificial or historical construct. This conceptualization of civil society as a deliberate sphere of individual will is distinguished from social institutions that are the products of evolution or natural to human society. These natural institutions or what sociologists call "community" are marked by relations that are ascribed, natural or primordial in contrast to relations that are historically constructed through "voluntary associations". As Mamdani (1993: 42) rightly points out, however, "this distinction between community and society (or association) was anchored in the postwar edifice of modernization theory constructed around the dichotomy of tradition and modernity" (see also Mitra, 1997: 227-33; Comaroff and Comaroff, 1993: xii).

A question which is most relevant to the Indian case is whether primordial groups and traditional institutions are part of civil society. Grounded on modernization theory, the growing literature on civil society today typically excludes the primordial and traditional groups regarding them as "pre-civil" (White, 1996: 180). Indian social theorists like Beteille (1999), Gupta (1997), and Mahajan (1999) who are strong followers of modernization tradition, argue that traditional communities or ascribed institutions are irreconcilable with civil society because they are repressive and organized hierarchically, impervious to individual choice, and spheres of unfreedom; they should

thus not be a part of civil society. Civil society, for the modernists, is constituted of open and secular institutions that promote the idea of citizenship.

Similarly, Kaviraj (2001: 320-321) argues that civil society is constituted of autonomous individuals making rational and deliberate choices (*gesellschaft)* rather than possessing any intrinsic political attributes. For him, *gemeinschaft* identities are likely to produce a political order opposed to autonomy and principles of choice. But, according to Oommen (2001: 227), to characterize them as partisan and parochial, and hence not part of civil society, is to ignore the fact that the civil society is nothing but the organized segment of a society (see also Nandy, 2000; Kothari, 2001).[19]

In India, religion, caste, ethnicity, and language have effectively been mobilized in articulating and representing group interests. The role of the primordial groups and traditional institutions in contemporary society and polity seems to have increased over past few decades.[20] Chhibber (1999), in his book *Democracy without Associations*, has argued that the politicization of these "ascriptive identities" – groupings to which people belong by birth, rather than by choice – has in fact shrunk the space available for non-partisan civil society in India.

According to Chhibber (1999), India has a very "weak associational life" because very few Indians belong to any kind of formal associations. The Word Value Survey data suggests that, in 1991, only 13% of all Indians belonged to a secondary organization,

[19] It is important to note that organized does not necessarily mean formation of associations. Communities like caste, religion, ethnicity or village communities can get organized or mobilized without (trans)forming themselves into associations. As a sphere of organized politics they constitute a part of civil society.

[20] The question of community gained political status in India during the 1980s because of the failure of the state-directed development programme and the simultaneous rise of identity politics. This revival of community is based on what Appadurai (1997) calls "conscious mobilization of cultural difference". These movements are seen as context specific politics. As Jodhka (2001) argues, crucial for a sociological understanding of communities today is the politics of their mobilization or, to put it in Benedict Anderson's words, "the style of their imagining".

which is the lowest as compared to other democracies of the world such as Iceland (90%), Sweden (85%), the Netherlands (84%), the USA (71%), the former West Germany (67%), Mexico (36%), Argentina (24%), and others (Chhibber, 1999: 17; see Table 2.1). If one accepted Chhibber's argument, it would mean the near "non-existence" of civil society in India. Chhibber's argument is grounded on the idea of Western modernity, citizenship and secular ideology; and could be right only if we take it for granted that: (1) all ascriptive identity groups are divisive and non-democratic in nature, and (2) civil society as a sphere that includes only democratic elements.

Table 2.1: "Global" Associational Membership

Country	% Belonging to at least 1 Association	Country	% Belonging to at least 1 Association
Iceland	90	Ireland	49
Sweden	85	Switzerland	43
Netherlands	84	Brazil	43
Norway	82	Slovenia	39
Denmark	81	France	38
Finland	77	Mexico	36
United States	71	Italy	34
South Korea	71	Japan	30
West Germany	67	Romania	30
Canada	64	Argentina	24
Belgium	57	Spain	23
Great Britain	52	**India**	**13**
Hungary	50		

Source: (Chhibber, 1999: 17)

However, in his book *Serving the Nation: Cultures of Service, Association and Citizenship in Colonial India*, Anthony C. Watt (2005) has shown that India had a very "vibrant associational culture" in the early 20th century. These associations were "richly variegated, autonomous and self-governing" and were the "cradles of citizenship, mutual assistance and social reform". In a review of Chhibber's book, Rudolph (2003: 1116) has

declared that by excluding the caste and other ascriptive associations from civil society Chhibber is actually narrowing civil society's scope in India. "Caste associations are anomalous; they are intentional associations, hybrids that combine voluntary with ascriptive characteristics. They can be amphibious, moving between society and politics, acting as both intentional social formations and party-like political formations" (*ibid*.: 1118; see also Jenkins, 2005). These associations exemplify "the modernity of tradition"; and hence, be a part of civil society.

According to Rudolph (2003: 1118) "[i]f caste associations, demand groups, issue and movement politics, and non-governmental organizations are taken into account, India could be 'read' as having a pervasive and extraordinarily active associational life, perhaps one of the most participatory in the world". Thus, any analysis of the intermediary space of civil society in India cannot afford to ignore these involuntary and ascribed groups.

It is argued here that civil society analysts of India can hardly wish away the primordial communities or the "first-tier associations" from its sphere since they constitute a part of the sphere of organized politics (Jenkins, 1999; Rudolph and Rudolph, 1968; Monga, 1995: 364; Lewis, 2004). It includes *all* social organizations i.e. both *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft* outside the sphere of state.[21] For me, these community institutions which belong to the little traditions of local life can be politically mobilized for the realization of collective interests. This mobilization or community movements originate as a spontaneous reaction or shared grievance to a given social, economic or

[21] Kaviraj (2001) argues that this would simply mean the rest of society. But, to say, society cannot be reduced to a set of traditional institutions and modern associations; it is conceptualized, argues Chandhoke (1995: 167), as the entirety of social practices with which a given community maintains and reproduces itself at a particular historical moment (see also Chatterjee, 1998a; Tonnies, 2001; Jodhka, 2001; Alam, 2005; and Jayaram, 2005).

political situation rather than by the structure of an organization – must not be confused with a voluntary association (Jayaram, 2005: 24-5). Thus, as Chatterjee (1998b: 282) has noted, communities in post-colonial societies like India have come to be recognized as "some of the most active agents of political practice".

2.6: Three Conceptions of Civil Society

Based on the above discussion and taking the ideological affiliations, group dynamics (social interests) and political orientations into account, the thesis distinguishes between three types of civil society organizations in India: (1) liberal pluralist, (2) neo-Marxist, and (3) communitarian.[22] This distinction is neither exhaustive nor based on any rigid, mutually exclusive compartmentalization; it is primarily politico-ideological in nature and there could be possible overlaps among these three types of organizations.

2.6.1: Liberal Pluralist

This is associated with Tocqueville and more recently with Putnam (1993) and Diamond (1999). Civil society organizations, according to this conception, are defined as autonomous and intermediary agencies between the citizens and the state. It should however be noted that although these organizations are autonomous of the state, they are not independent of it, for "the guarantor of the autonomy of civil society can be none other than the state" (Mamdani, 1996: 15). The Habermasian "public sphere" also reflects some attributes of this tradition which emphasizes upon the formation of "public

[22] Grugel (2002: 92-6) discusses the liberal and radical understanding of civil society and their role in democratization. While discussing the labour movement in Indonesia, Hadiz (1997: 140-56) has similarly identified three clusters of labour-based NGOs, such as "corporatist reformist", the "liberal/social democratic reformist" and the "radical". But neither of them has discussed the communitarian type. In his book, *A Place for Us,* Benjamin Barber (1998: 12-37) has defined civil society from the libertarian, the communitarian, and the democratic perspectives.

opinion", social space and free debate for the solution of issues. However, this is very selective and dominated by the English educated middle classes of the society.

Civil society organizations, according to this conception, are influenced by the liberal democratic values of Western enlightenment such as individual rights, equality, freedom, rule of law, and pluralism. The liberal pluralist organizations exclude the primordial/traditional elements from their sphere as they are hierarchical and oppressive in nature. These organizations support "state neutrality" and envisage a "minimal state" (Rawls, 1971). They share a complementary and cooperative relationship with the state and act within the defined rule of law. Their objective is to strengthen democracy and act as the "magic bullet" for resolving many intractable social, economic and political problems (Edwards and Hulme, 1995). At the same time, they play an important role in demanding state accountability thus acting as Tocqueville's "watchdogs of democracy".

The liberal-pluralist civil society organizations emphasize trust, tolerance, civility, cooperation, and networks of civic engagement and give less attention to the structural problems and power relations in society. The elements of "power" and "politics" remain largely missing from the world-views proposed by these organizations. Also, the liberal pluralists see the state as the guarantor of individual freedom and right and do not recognize the fact that it could also be an instrument of class domination.

2.6.2: Neo-Marxist

This is associated with Gramsci and more recently with the works of Cohen and Arato (1995), Habermas (1989), and less directly, Keane (1988) and Chandhoke (1995). As discussed above, for Gramsci, civil society is a "sphere of hegemony" where the state reproduces itself in the practices of everyday life through activities situated in civil

society and constructs the consciousness of the individual and of the collectivity, a consciousness which in the final instance is meant to reproduce the power of the capitalist system itself (Chandhoke, 1995: 151-153; Kumar, 1993: 382). However, he also argued that although civil society reproduces the conditions for ruling class hegemony, it acts as the "zone of contestation" where the subaltern classes challenge the power of the hegemonic group (Hedman, 2006: 184). Thus, for Gramsci, civil society is not just a "sphere of hegemony" but also a sphere that formulates counter-hegemonic conceptions of the social order.

The Gramscian perspective sees civil society as "a site for contestation, where people counter-pose themselves against state power and in the process either replace or reform it" (Tandon and Mohanty, 2003: 11). Unlike the liberal pluralist conception, the emphasis here lies on "politics" and power relations in society.[23] It does not see state as a minimalist organization; rather as an agency responsible for the protection of individual rights but at the same time recognizes the fact that state has the capacity to undermine the rights of the individual. Civil society organizations can act as a "counter-hegemonic" force and engage with the state to redress the unequal power relations and structural problems, to transform its nature, and to make it accountable to the interests of the people through community activism, social/political mobilization, and political protest. The *civil public* gets transformed into a *political public* which not only holds the state power accountable but also possesses the right to dismiss the states that failed to respond to broad political aspirations (Chandhoke, 2004: 145).

[23] Struggles in civil society have to be necessarily political because in order to attain freedom and equality, they have to address codified structures of power (Chandhoke, 1995: 228). Politics is not about political arena alone but also about the economic sphere and the distribution of resources.

Since civil society organizations, according to this conception, emphasize "claim-making" and rights[24], and challenge the hegemony of the elites, their relationship with the state is often "confrontational". Civil society, thus, acquires a "conflictive practice related to power – that is to a struggle about who is entitled to participate in the process of defining common problems and deciding how will they be faced" (Jelin, 1996 cited in Grugel, 2002: 94-5). This means it is important to identify who is active in civil society, or how citizenship is constructed, in order to analyze its democratic potential (*ibid*). This constant conflict between the state and civil society has three basic implications: (1) transformation of both the state and civil society, (2) extension of citizenship beyond the elitist sphere, and (3) attainment of social justice. Movement groups and rights based activism occupy major place in this tradition.

2.6.3: Communitarian

The communitarian thinking first emerged as a critique of modernity and Kantian liberalism, which emphasize atomistic individualism. Durkheim's solidarity, Tonnies' *gemeinschaft,* and Walzer (1990), Taylor (1991) and Etzioni's communitarian politics offer the foundation for this perspective which tries "to foster what is considered a *better* society" (Etzioni, 2001: 190; see also Joas, 2000).

The supporters of communitarian perspective are of the view that there is "rising moral anarchy" due to increasing modernization and, thus, there is a need to "rebuild community" to regain its civility, and strengthen its moral values, virtues and bonds that tie people together enabling overcome isolation and alienation (Etzioni, 1995: iii-v; Joas

[24] According to Chandhoke (1995: 204), "rights are significant in political life because they address the fundamental question of how human beings to be treated". They define the fundamental inviolability of persons.

and Adloff, 2006).[25] For them, mechanical solidarity or "categorical identity" (Calhoun, 2002) based on moral authority and rooted in shared *collective conscience*[26], as opposed to the atomistic individualism of organic solidarity, is the basis of "good society".

In his Massey lecture, Taylor (1991: 10) has addressed three "malaises of modernity": (1) individualism and "a loss of meaning, the fading of moral horizons"; (2) "the eclipse of ends, in face of rampant instrumental reason"; and (3) "a loss of freedom" in the "highly centralized and bureaucratic political world". Secularism, which is a "pristine form of liberalism" (Chakrabarty, 2002: 81) and product of western modernity, has been criticized as alien to Indian culture and tradition, and as the root cause of moral crisis and religious violence in South Asia (Madan, 1987; Nandy, 1985/2003).

Unlike liberalism, communitarian politics subordinates the individual will to the higher moral authority and cultural practices of the community. As Horowitz (1982: 361) notes, "to act morally is to act in terms of the collective interest". The communitarian politics also "rejects the state regulation of moral behaviour" as coercive and nurture the virtues through community and "culture" (Etzioni, 2001: 189).

According to Etzioni (2001: 191), there are three basic cultural means to promote virtues in large areas of personal and social conduct: (1) agencies of *socialization* (family, schools, some peer groups, places of worship, and some voluntary associations) that instill values into new members of the society, resulting in an internal moral voice (conscience) that guide people towards goodness; (2) agencies of *social reinforcement* that support in social psychological sense of the term, the values members have already

[25] As Etzioni (1995: 11) rightly notes, these community bonds could refer to families; neighborhoods; innumerable social, religious, ethnic, work place and professional associations; and the body politic itself.
[26] It refers to "the totality of beliefs and sentiments common to the average citizens of the same society" which forms a determinate system with its own life (Horowitz, 1982: 362).

acquired (especially interpersonal bonds, peer relations, communal bonds, public visibility and leadership) – these provide an external moral voice; and (3) values fostered because they are built into *societal institutions* (for instance marriage).

Etzioni (2001: 196) makes distinction between "good society" and "civil society" and argues that "these terms are by no means oppositional". The former promotes social virtues and is "centred around a core of substantive, particularistic values" (*ibid.* 199); while the latter can either be good, bad or neutral.[27] By taking value-laden civil society organizations into consideration, a communitarian perspective refers to both the natural and voluntary associations which promote culture, community, morality, and social values for the establishment of a good and virtuous society.

It should, however, be recognized that what is virtuous for one group may not be for others; and this may often fuel communal antagonism, increase intolerance and exclusion, and demonize others as enemies. This demonization "institutionalizes political authoritarianism in the name of community" where the dominant community or the state imposes "a received set of moral values on unwilling subjects" (Chua, 2004: 12; see also Calhoun, 2002: 160-1; Etzioni, 1995: 13).

As argued before, civil society organizations are not always marked by "civility" and similar is the case with communitarian organizations, which may either be civil or uncivil and thus may have positive or negative implications for democratization. "Politics" is not absent; rather communities/organizations are heavily politicized to protect their common collective moral interest.

[27] Though civil society affirms some values, they are only a thin layer of procedural and/or tautological ones. It cherishes reasoned (rather than value-laden) discourse, mutual tolerance, participatory skills, and volunteerism; but these values do not entail any particular social formulations of the good (see Etzioni, 2001: 197).

2.7: Is Civil Society a Democratic Force?

The fundamental objective of this dissertation is to understand the nature of civil society and its implications for democratization in Rajasthan, India. The existing literature suggests that civil society is widely believed to have the potential to make a positive contribution to democratization (Putnam, 1993; Diamond, 1999; Beteille, 1999; Gupta, 2000). The civil society argument claims that a robust, strong, and vibrant civil society strengthens and enhances liberal democracy. As Dettke (1998: x) in his foreword to Walzer's book states, "it is possible to have a market economy without democracy, but it is inconceivable to have a democracy without the institutions of civil society".

Although civil society is considered a necessary element for a democracy, India since independence has been following a "statist" approach of development and democratization through the post-colonial project of development and nation-building (see Chapter 3).[28] It is argued here that neither the "primacy of civil society approach" nor the "predominance of the state approach" is adequate to understand democratization process. Democratization is not a one way process; it is contingent on the social and political relationships and the interface between state and civil society. This theoretical approach emphasizes the reciprocal constitution of a strong facilitating state and a strong civil society for democratization (Muetzelfeldt and Smith, 2002: 58, Walzer, 1992).

This approach, however, recognizes the fact that strong "uncivil society" groups could undermine the democratization process; so also a strong autocratic and obstructive

[28] This does not mean that civil society was completely absent in Indian society; but, as Kaviraj (2001) argues, during the early phases of post-colonial period the Indian state not only controlled "the public political apparatus" but also controlled "the private social life" of the individual. Through welfare and democratic provisions, the state assumed the role of provider, protector and regulator which created an illusion of consensus that an *active* civil society distinct from the state is unnecessary (Kaviraj, 2001: 315).

state. The essential question is what *type* of civil society[29] and state positively contribute the democratization process? The choice is not between civil society and state, but rather between different types of civil society and state, their nature, and the interests that preside over them. It is argued here that if civil society is to contribute positively towards democratization it needs to be dominated by groups that have an interest in democratic *civility* and in pushing the state in a liberal democratic direction.

However, there are civil society interests that may undermine democracy[30], and there are states that may destroy the potential for democracy, for example, by forcing citizens to retreat into isolation from fear of the state. Thus, "how collective action through civil society is pursued depends on the responsiveness of state institutions, rather than on civil society itself" (Boussard, 2002: 165). As Oxhorn (1995: 252) has argued, civil society's strength depends upon its capacity "simultaneously to *resist subordination* to the state and to *demand inclusion* into national political structures".

According to Hewison and Rodan (1996), White (1996), and Chandhoke (1995) civil society is a site of struggle and political mobilization. It is a sphere where groups organize on class and other social bases – gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, and environment – engage in political and ideological struggles or "organized politics". Taking into account the expansion of political space, Hewison and Rodan (1996: 41-43) argue that the range of organizations in society may be enormous, but not all engage in

[29] White (1996) talks about different types of civil society organizations such as modern interest groups, traditional ascriptive organizations, political groups, advocacy groups, legal and open associations, illegal and secret organizations, etc. He argues, depending on the context some elements of civil society would be politically uninvolved, some tolerant or supportive of authoritarian rule, some working towards an alternative conception of democracy radically different from the liberal version, and some "progressive" in the sense that they favour and foster a liberal democratic polity.

[30] Sometimes the "counterweight" of civil society becomes burden for democracy. As Mancur Olson perceives, the "dense webs of association" praised by the civil society argument as enduring threats to the smooth and equitable functioning of modern states and markets alike (Foley and Edwards, 1996: 39-40).

overtly political activity. This is where they identify apolitical groups such as sporting clubs as well as charitable and welfare-oriented associations as *civic* organizations.

For Hewison and Rodan, *civil* society includes a range of non-state politically active groups which may or may not be legal such as political parties, NGOs, peasant and ethnic associations, student organizations, and women's groups. These groups are regularly involved in political actions which attempt to advance the interests of people, ranging from those of their members to the more general interest of wider groups in society. Thus, for them, it is not the emergence of organizations that is the measure of an expanded civil society; it is when social pluralism turns into political pluralism, civil society gets established (Hewison and Rodan, 1996: 41). However, the thesis takes a broader perspective to include not just the politicized "civil" organizations as argued by Chandhoke (1995), Hewison and Rodan (1996), and White (1996), but also the apolitical "civic" associations within the sphere of civil society.

There is a definitional problem if we include political parties within the purview of civil society. Although political parties, by definition, are voluntary associations, many argue that they are involved in the struggle for state power and thus be excluded from the domain of civil society (Jayaram, 2005: 24). The question then is can we exclude all groups that compete for political power? Although it is difficult to determine the location of groups competing for political/state power (i.e. political parties) in relation to the state and civil society as a continuum, for reasons of convenience they can be placed under so-called of "political society", which is described as a sphere of mediation between civil society and the state.[31]

[31] Here, the thesis differs from Chatterjee's (1998a; 2004) distinction between civil society and political society. For him, as civil society in India is exclusionary, it is the political society which plays a significant

Thus, civil society is a non-state sphere of associations, which may or may not be legal, but primarily involved in advancing the interests of people rather than for political power, ranging from those of their members to the more general interest of wider groups in society. It includes *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft* as well as apolitical and politicized organizations; and it is also the sphere where the "civil public" gets transformed into "political public". The question then is how does civil society get politicized? As White (1996: 184) argues, "civil society derives its political character from the deeper socio-economic structure of a society and the distribution of interests, social norms and the power which it embodies".

Do all the politically active organizations positively contribute towards democratization? In other words, does politicization of civil society lead to democratization? In fact, a vigorous associational life does not always contribute to the consolidation of democratic order and institutional performance. Contrary to the expectations of neo-Tocquevillians such as Putnam, civil associations can generate severe conflicts in civil society that endanger democracy (Kwon, 2004: 136). Berman (1997: 564) has rightly argued that dense networks of "civil society can often serve to weaken rather than strengthen democracy", for example, if they are dominated by Nazis as in the case of Weimar era Germany. Civil society is not necessarily a sphere of freedom and pro-democratic forces, and should not be confused with a "good" society or "virtuous"

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political and democratic role in the society by acting as the mediating zone between the state and the population. Given the nature of the political parties today in Indian society, this generalization proves to be very dangerous. I subscribe the understanding of political society as defined by Gordon White. Political society refers to a range of institutions and actors which mediate and channel the relationships between civil society and the state; and two crucial characteristics of it are: political parties and political leaders. As White (1996) tells us, parties may be integrative institutions or may act divisively to intensify the inherent schisms. It is not a solely democratic force as envisioned by Chatterjee. It is because of this, the USAID and most bilateral donor agencies exclude political parties from their definition of civil society. For them, civil society includes only the democratic forces (see Jenkins, 1999: 217).

society. As Walzer (1998) tells, civil society excludes no one and includes everyone. This compels us to conclude that civil society organizations need not be democratic at all; and whether it is at a given time and place is a matter of empirical investigation.

It should be noted, however, that a legitimate and indeed positive role of associations sometimes involves resisting and contesting the state (Chambers and Kopstein, 2001: 839). What role organized groups in civil society will play depends on the larger political context. Thus, in order to understand the role of civil society, we must discern how and under what circumstances a society's organized components contribute to democratization (Foley and Edwards, 1996).[32] As Kwon (2004: 136) argues, "local or civic associations cannot produce specific political outcomes, and that their effects on democracy depend upon interactions with the larger political and ideological context".[33]

A related question arises about the scope of civil society mobilization and its relation with democratization. It is important to ask whether civil society is mobilized for larger "public interest" instead of "special interests" of groups. It is argued here that although the former is more democratic in nature and scope than the latter, the latter could also contribute to democratization process at the grassroots level depending upon its implications for and interaction with the larger political and ideological context. Most often civil society movements begin as special interest of particular groups, but later get extended to address the issues in larger socio-political context. Sometimes the special interest groups also act in "sectarian ways" which stands as an anti-thesis to the larger

[32] Foley and Edwards (1996) explain democratization in terms of political strength or political failure. But political strength does not necessarily mean democratization. It may signify authoritarian dominance of the state over society and people.

[33] By revealing how rich associational life resulted in the establishment of Fascism, Kwon argues that associations do not necessarily contribute to the stabilization of democracy, and thus emphasizes to understand the transformation of identities of associations in a political and ideological context (see Kwon, 2004; Chambers and Kopstein, 2001).

public interest. It is thus important to be sensitive to the functioning of special interest groups in comparison to the larger socio-political and ideological context.

Chambers and Kopstein (2001: 841) have distinguished between particularistic civility and democratic civility, which is similar to Putnam's (1993) idea of bonding and bridging social capital. Bonding involves looking inward and tends to reinforce exclusive identities and homogeneous groups. Bridging, by contrast, involves making connections across social, ethnic, and political cleavages.

Following Putnam, they note that particularistic civility contains all the virtues that are associated with participation (trust, public spiritedness, and self-sacrifice), but only between members of a group, and it often encourages the opposite sort of attitude to members outside of the group. Democratic civility, in contrast, extends the virtues learned in participation to all citizens regardless of group membership (*ibid.*).[34] Although, Putnam insists that bonding is as important as bridging, Chambers and Kopstein argue that to deal with the problem of "malevolent" social capital, we need to understand which kind of bonding actively discourages *democratic civility*; we also need to see which special interest groups discourage democratization and why.

It is usually the case that those groups which work for the broadening of democratic values represent broader societal interests than those that advocate for sectarian interests like caste and ethnicity. As such, In India, Beteille (1999), Gupta (2000) and Kaviraj (2001) condemn the hierarchical nature of traditional and sectarian groups and instead urge the establishment of horizontal associations governed by the

[34] Following Putnam, in his study on ethnic conflict in India, Varshney (2001) argues that where communities are organized only along intra-ethnic lines and where the interconnections with other communities are very weak or even nonexistent, then ethnic violence is quite likely. But inter-ethnic networks build bridges, manage tensions, and act as agents of peace.

principles of openness, citizenship and equality. They deny a space for the traditional groups in civil society and argue that the latter is universal and democratic in nature.

But such theorists have actually missed a major point. Just like there are different kinds of civil society, there are also different kinds of democracy. Different kinds of civil society help to forge different kinds of democracy, given that any system of power will reflect the relations of domination and subordination that are inherent in them. Thus, some democracies have at least historically reflected the interests of organized labour, for example, in places such as Western Europe where workers' associational activity has been so effective that labour became a major force within broader civil society. The result was what we know as European social democracy, an outcome which is inconceivable in societies where organized labour has only been a marginal force.

Moreover, there are some "uncivil" forces undermine democracy should their interests become ascendant within civil society. There are also some forces in civil society which may not undermine the functioning of democracy, but bend the democratic rules for their own interest to the detriment of others. Here democracy is not subverted but serves a particular interest which could be called "patronage oriented democracy".

As argued in the beginning, neither civil society nor the state alone could bring democratization. Civil society not only potentially limits the arbitrary power of the state and holds state power accountable but also can produce challenges to states that fail to respond to the aspirations of the people. But the state also directly helps to shape the kind of civil society that may emerge in any context. It provides the politico-legal framework and institutionalizes the normative prerequisites of rights, freedom and the rule of law,

implying that the state has immense power to define which kinds of civil society organizations are permissible under law (Chandhoke, 2004: 150).

In India, for example, there is the Societies Registration Act of 1860, the Indian Trusts Act of 1882, the Charitable and Religious Trusts Acts of 1920, or the nonprofit clause under Section 25 of the Companies Act of 1956, which regulate the activities of NGOs and give the state the right to scrutinize their work (Behar and Prakash, 2006: 204). As will be discussed in Chapter 3, during the rule of Indira Gandhi the Foreign Contributions Regulation Act (FCRA) of 1976 was introduced to control international funding to the NGOs. This shows that the state enjoys, as Weber (1919) has stated, monopoly over the legitimate use of coercion, which could constrain the domain of civil society, and its freedom and autonomy (Anderson, 1976: 32; see Chapter 5).

Thus some states can provide a stimulus for the development of a civil society that can contribute towards democratization. Krygier thus argues that a state that is both strong and facilitating is a prerequisite for a vigorous civil society (cited in Muetzelfeldt and Smith, 2002: 57). According to him, states may be strong in various ways. Despotism inhibits and obstructs civil society by preventing its emergence or undermining it where it already has emerged. By contrast, as argued before, liberal democratic states[35] are an example of strong states that provide a supportive base for civil society. Facilitating states support and enable civil society in two ways (*ibid*: 58). They are benign and tolerant enough to make civil society possible and even easy by not inhibiting or limiting its

[35] Though it is true that liberal democratic state institutions provide facilitative ground for civil society, in some cases it could also act detrimental to civil society. As Muetzelfeldt and Smith (2002: 59) show, broadly liberal democratic states typically have a strong police force that may support civil society by contributing to generally safe and tolerant public spaces; however, at the same time, police may undermine the civil capacity of some groups by using their discretionary operational powers in a discriminating way.

emergence and development. But, more than that, they actively provide capacity, ability and power that civil society needs if it is to emerge and thrive.

Obstructive states, on the other hand, inhibit civil society by restricting the sphere of political and permissible. Krygier argues that while strong obstructive states are detrimental to civil society, weak states are no better. Where the state is weak, a market develops for entrepreneurs of violence and protection (Muetzelfeldt and Smith, 2002: 58). Strong and facilitating states are, thus, vital for democratization process. Some of the features of such states are: they have not only law but the rule of law, they support liberal democratic (not populist) politics, and they provide institutional, social and cultural basis of trust between the state and the people, and among the people (*ibid*). This, however, does not mean that civil society needs a benign state to survive, but through its struggle and mobilization, it can force the state to act benign and operate responsively to the demands of the people (see Chapter 5).

This approach to democratization, thus, provides an analytical framework that allows reciprocal socio-political reproduction between state and civil society. As argued before, democratization requires *politicization* of social forces in the sense that they challenge received identities, pursue their own interests, cooperate and organize politically as citizens and raise demands for a democratic state. Democratization is not a one-way initiative of state or civil society, rather a two-way interaction between a strong *civil* society and a strong, responsive, and liberal democratic state. As Keane (1988) argues, "civil society and the state must become the condition of each other's democratization". For him:

> …without a secure and independent civil society of autonomous public spheres, goals such as freedom and equality, participatory planning and community

> decision-making will be nothing but empty slogans. But without the protective, redistributive and conflict-mediating functions of the state, struggles to transform civil society will become ghettoized, divided and stagnant, or will spawn their own, new forms of inequality and unfreedom (cited in Kumar, 1993: 385).

To conclude, as Michael Walzer (1992) puts it:

> …a democratic civil society seems to require a democratic state, and a strong civil society seems to require a strong and responsive state. The strength and responsiveness of democracy may depend upon the character of its civil society, [as Putnam argues], reinforcing both the democratic functioning and the strength of the state. But such effects depend on the prior achievement of both democracy and a strong state (cited in Foley and Edwards 1996: 4).

2.9: Summary and Conclusion

This chapter discussed the conceptual and theoretical perspectives to understand the process of democratization in relation to the state as well as civil society. It began with the problem of democratic transition and argued that the trajectory of democratic deepening in India is different from that posited in "transitology"; and suggested that neither the perspective of economic development and modernization nor the theory of class structure can explain the survival and deepening of democracy in India over the last few decades. Considering the increasing role of civil society in the political sphere today, an approach that focuses on civil society was adopted to explain the process of democratization in India. It was argued that all kinds of civil society organizations do not necessarily result in democratization. It also discussed the fact that the democratic effects of civil society could be undermined by an authoritarian and unresponsive state. Democratization is, thus, contingent upon the existence of a strong democratically politicized civil society and a responsive democratic state.

3

STATE AND CIVIL SOCIETY IN INDIA: A SOCIO-HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

3.1: Introduction

This chapter provides a socio-historical analysis of the state and civil society in India. It argues that, in India, the nature of civil society is diverse and several factors have been responsible for its development. If national sentiment and anti-colonial struggle motivated the English educated middle class to form civil associations during the colonial period, the discourse of development and rural reconstruction constituted the major factors of growth of civil society organizations during the early phases of the post-colonial period. Gandhian organizations, in collaboration with the state, continued to play a dominant role in social welfare and service delivery during this period. The "failure of the state" and imposition of the Emergency rule during the mid-1970s, however, radicalized Gandhian organizations, which challenged the legitimacy of the state. Various micro-movements emerged to fight against the authoritarian rule of Mrs Gandhi, and to protect the civil, political and economic rights of the citizens.

In the 1990s, the neo-liberal policies of globalization and international development aid combined to cause the mushrooming of middle-class dominated NGOs, which became partners of the state in public service delivery. Today, the relationship between state and civil society is marked both by cooperation and conflict. Civil society organizations have become critical partners of the state in areas such as service delivery,

welfare, and development but some have also continued to challenge the neo-liberal policies of the state that has threatened lives and livelihoods of the poor and marginal people of society.

3.2: Civil Society in Colonial India

British colonialism in India instituted nothing less than "colonial sovereignty" or absolute control over Indian populations on the part of the colonial power.[1] However, due to various reasons such as the vastness of the country and the absence of a linking language, it became difficult for the colonial power to exercise absolute control (Kaviraj, 2001). In order to govern, the British colonial forces, through various social and educational reforms, created an intermediary English educated middle class, who remained "loyal" to the British rule (Chandra, 2002: 19).[2] The colonial state also brought many institutional changes and introduced several modern political practices in Indian society.

Although the activities of Christian missions were significantly curtailed by the East India Company's concern about disturbing local sensibilities, the passing of the Charter Act of 1813 resulted in increasing missionary activity in India with a special focus on promoting education, health, social welfare and reform (see Dirks, 1996: 116; van der Veer, 1996: 3; Jaffrelot, 1996: 14; Nandy, 2002: 40-41; Chaube, 1999: 525). These missionary activities and reforms, which received the protection and patronage of the colonial state, eventually produced new English educated elites who were well versed

[1] According to Comaroff and Comaroff (1997: 16), "colonialism" usually meant "three things: the 'exploitation of indigenous peoples', the imposition of sovereign authority, and the establishment of a permanent settler population, usually marked off as racially distinct from 'the natives'".

[2] The Indians were initially loyal to the British rule because they thought English education had provided them the opportunity acquire "real" knowledge; and also the English were important in making Indians "wise, virtuous and strong". However, as education advanced, the interests of the Indians clashed with the British and got manifested through a strong anti-colonial nationalist movement (Chandra, 2002: 20-21).

in the concepts and practices of European societal life (Sheth and Sethi, 1991: 50; Kaviraj, 2001). The newly educated elites received exposure to English culture, literature, etiquette, and style of government, which resulted in the development of a modern, although limited, public sphere.[3]

Although "the zamidars [upper caste landed elites] were the first to conduct politics on an institutional basis" (Chandra, 2002: 30), mastery of the English language gave the new Indian middle class access to the worldviews and epistemologies which had been evolving in Europe during the centuries since, and before, the Renaissance. The sensibilities and practices of the Indian middle class were conditioned by European modernity (Chakrabarty, 2000; Chatterjee, 1993).[4] The English educated middle class, who studied in the missionary schools and were influenced by the Western thought, became concerned about the age-old customs and practices like child marriage, *sati*, the degraded status of women, and the taboos on widow remarriage (Sen, 1993: 4).

These problems were framed in line with the modern idea of social injustice rather than individual pain (Chakrabarty, 2000; Vasudevan, 2005: 251). This led to the first associational activity to be started on the basis of voluntary efforts in the form of an institution for the aged established by Rev. Loveless in Madras, which began functioning

[3] Saberwal (2001: 197) notes that such processes had a historical precedent: in the medieval period, the men of literati castes took the Persian language, under the late Saltanat and Mughals. This introduced them to Persian literature, etiquette, and to a limited degree, experience in the apparatus of governing, especially in collecting revenue.

[4] In his book *Provincializing Europe*, Chakrabarty (2000) has argued that "Europe" – not as a region, but as a body of ideas, perspectives and practices that are synonymous almost with notions of what is "modern" and "capitalist", "rational" and "scientific" – has played a significant role in conditioning the colonial and post-colonial self-awareness. In a sense "Europe" is tied into South Asia's modernity. Chatterjee (1993: 235) has similarly argued that if there is one great moment that turns the provincial thought of Europe to universal philosophy, the parochial history of Europe to universal history, it is the moment of capital – capital that is global in its territorial reach and universal in its conceptual domain. However, disagreeing with Chatterjee, Kaviraj (2001: 307) argues that the introduction of modern political practices to the non-Western world is not because of the sole universalizing force of capital but is a result of the combination of colonialism, liberalism and capitalism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

in 1807 (Sooryamoorthy and Gangrade, 2001: 41). A number of Hindu religious and reformist organizations came into being, which later became the ideological basis for Hindu nationalist movement in India.

Raja Ram Mohun Roy founded the *Atmiya Society* in 1815 and the *Brahmo Samaj* in 1828; Mahadev Govind Ranade founded the *Prarthana Samaj* in 1864; and Dayananda Saraswathy founded the *Arya Samaj* in 1875. All these organizations aspired to maintain the basic elements of traditional Hindu social order, establish the supremacy of Hindu sacred texts such as *Vedas* and *Upanishads*, reform the ill-practices such as child marriage, *sati*, and the *purdah* system, and strengthen Hinduism's standing in relation to Christianity (Jaffrelot, 1993: 517-8; Juergensmeyer, 2008: 105; Kinnvall, 2006: 93).

Several other social reformist organizations also were formed. For example, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar launched crusade against the degraded position of women during the nineteenth century. In the south, Virasalingam founded the Rajahmundri Social Reform Association in 1878, while a Hindu Social Reform Association was established in Madras in 1892. In 1905, G. K. Gokhale founded the Servants of India Society, which laid the foundations for secular voluntary action in India (Metcalf and Metcalf, 2006: 140; Sooryamoorthy and Gangrade, 2001: 44).

Indian society thus experienced tremendous transformations in many dimensions of socio-political and economic life. However, it was observed that "the Indian role in governing was limited to providing manpower almost exclusively at the lower levels of government, to service in the army, and to consultation on the part of the loyal elites". (Metcalf and Metcalf, 2006: 124). Moreover, despite their mastery of the English language, by the early 1880s only 16 Indians (of the 900-odd posts) had succeeded in

entering the Indian Civil Service (Sarkar, 1984: 1). The learning of the (Western) language of law provided an effective medium to engage with the colonial rulers, and so politically conscious (English educated) Indians demanded inclusion in the governing structure and access to civil and political rights (Saberwal, 2001: 197-198). The Indian League was thus founded in Calcutta on 25 September 1875 as the first political association to represent the middle class interest (Chandra, 2002: 29).

Dadabhai Naroji and R.C. Dutt wrote powerful critiques of the high land revenue demand and the drain of wealth funneled through India's export surplus, which they held squarely responsible for poverty and famines in India (Bose, 1997: 47). Naroji also argued for "the rights of Indians as British subjects" and became the first Indian to be elected to the British House of Commons where he engaged with the colonial rulers about the question of India's governance (Metcalf and Metcalf, 2006: 124). Nationalists like Bal Gangadhar Tilak followed a rather more radical approach against colonial rule and demanded that "swaraj [self rule] is my birth right and I will have it". Indian nationalism, thus, "began as a critique of policy" and "became a critique of British power by its being denied a voice in government" (Ludden, 1992: 263).

Though the formally educated were few in number, they represented an increasingly audible voice in public life.[5] They criticized the government and continued public discussion in several newspapers. The later part of the nineteenth century thus saw the emergence of several powerful nationalist newspapers like *Amrit Bazaar Patrika* (1868)[6], *the Hindu* (1878)[7], *Indian Mirror* (1878)[8], *Kesari* (1880)[9], *Swadesamitran*

[5] They constituted barely 3% of the total population in 1921 (a ratio of roughly 5 males for every 1 female; and English educated comprised less than 1% of the population) (Metcalf and Metcalf, 2006: 135).
[6] It was the oldest newspaper in India which was debuted on 20 February 1868 by Tusharkanti Ghose and Sisir Kumar Ghose (Gupta, 2003).

(1882)[10], *Voice of India* (1883)[11], *Sudharak*[12], and so on. The number of English newspapers approximately doubled to about 300 between 1885 and 1905 and the number of vernacular newspapers increased even more (Metcalf and Metcalf, 2006: 136). The circulation of English language newspapers had grown from 90,000 in 1885 to 276,000 in 1905, whose readership mostly comprised of lawyers, teachers and journalists (Sarkar, 1984: 65; Jayal, 2007: 144). The growth of newspapers provided a socio-political space for the literate elites and middle class people to express critical thinking.

The educated elites continued not only their critical discussion in the newspapers but also formed several voluntary interest associations. The Poona Sarvajanik Sabha (1870), the Indian Association in Calcutta (1876),[13] the Madras Mahajana Sabha (1884), and the Bombay Presidency Association (1885) were founded to represent the Indian interest in the government. In addition, this period also witnessed several autonomous initiatives and movements that were building up among industrial workers, peasants, subordinated castes, religious identities, ethnic and linguistic formations, and women's groups. British rule and its policies of private ownership of land eroded traditions of collective ownership within tribal society (Sarkar, 1984: 44). The control and grabbing of tribal land as well as the increase in taxes by money lenders, traders, and contractors sharpened tensions, which eventually resulted in violent conflicts, such as the Santal

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[7] The first issue of *The Hindu* was published on 20 September 1878, by a group of six young men, led by G. Subramania Aiyer, a radical social reformer and school teacher from Thanjavur.
[8] *Indian Mirror* was an English-daily published by the Brahmo Samaj in Calcutta between 1878 and 1889.
[9] *Kesari* was started by Lokmanya Balgangadhar Tilak in 1880.
[10] *Swadesamitran*, which literally means the "friend of self-rule", was started by G. Subramania Aiyer, who felt the need for a Tamil newspaper when the freedom struggle was passing through a critical phase.
[11] *The Voice of India* was started by Dadabhai Naoroji in 1883.
[12] Gopal Agarkar, a contemporary of Tilak and reformer of the 19th century, who was influenced by the rationality of Western thought, started *Sudharak*, an Anglo-Marathi newspaper from Poona, to propagate his new social reforms (http://www.ncte-in.org/pub/tilak/section3.htm; accessed 18 November 2008).
[13] Surendranath Banerjea (1848-1926), a brilliant student who struggled to enter the Indian Civil Service (ICS) and then was dismissed on petty grounds, founded the Indian Association in Calcutta in 1876.

rebellion of 1855, the Naikda forest tribe attack on police station in 1868, the Sapha Har movement of the 1870s, the Kacha Nagas attack on whites in 1882, the Birsa Munda rebellion in the region south of Ranchi in 1899-1900 and several others (*ibid*: 44).

A large number of caste s*abhas* also emerged to represent their caste interests after the 1881 decennial census that recognized group status (Metcalf and Metcalf, 2006: 138; Rudolph and Rudolph, 1960). This strengthened caste solidarity where members were mobilized for social recognition, jobs, and political favours (Sarkar, 1984: 55). Some such examples were the untouchable Ezhavas in Kerala and the Mahars of Maharashtra who successfully spearheaded anti-Brahmanical movements in south India. These caste *sabhas* also acted as agencies for peasant mobilization against feudalism.

Similarly, labour movement also began to rise in various parts of the country. By the 1890s, the proletarian population around Bombay cotton and Calcutta jute mills protested against long working hours and the appalling living and working conditions. Data suggests that 25 strikes were recorded in Bombay and Madras between 1882 and 1890, several big strikes in Bombay in 1892-93 and 1901, and that a new spirit of militancy was evident among Calcutta jute workers (Sarkar, 1984: 62).

It should be noted, however, that although these movements emerged in the 19th century they largely remained peripheral to the nationalist movement, which was mostly dominated by the English educated middle class. The middle class created associations with a desire to replicate the secular virtues of Western modernity and bourgeois freedom in Indian public life. The most important of all was the Indian National Congress (INC) that was established by some seventy English educated Indians in 1885 with the help of a retired British ICS officer, Allen Octavian Hume. Although the INC was created with the

objective to mobilize masses against the colonial rule, it remained elitist until the 1920s when Gandhi transformed it to an open and inclusive mass-based party.[14]

Mahatma Gandhi's return to India from South Africa in 1915 not only provided a boost for mass-based nationalist movement but significantly influenced the civil society and state-building process in India. He started his work at the grassroots level and mobilized ordinary masses around local problems like that of the Champaran indigo cultivators, Ahmadabad textile workers, and Kheda peasants. His doctrine of *ahimsa* (non-violence) and *satyagraha* (passive resistance) appealed the rural masses and also acted as the unifying force mediating social conflicts and contributing greatly to the anti-colonial nationalist movement (Sarkar, 1984: 179-80).

The 1920s and 1930s was also the period when, largely through Gandhi and Congress related efforts, voluntary civil social associations began to flourish (Jenkins, 2005; see Table 3.4). Gandhi emphasized voluntary action as the only way for India's development. His idea of *swaraj* (self-rule) was to create self-supporting, self-governing and self-reliant "village-level civil societies" where everyone's needs will be satisfied and everyone will live in harmony and cooperation (Schneider, 2007: 26-7). In order to achieve this, Gandhi initiated associations like Harijan Sevak Sangh, Buniyadi Talim and the All-India Spinner's Association and urged the volunteers to participate in "constructive work" programmes for rural development and to mobilize the masses for India's independence movement (Behar and Prakash, 2006: 196).[15]

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[14] Muslims criticized the Congress as an organization dominated by Western educated elite "Hindus" and thus launched the Muslim League in 1906 at the Annual meeting of the Educational Conference in Dacca "to protect Islamic interests from the Western educated Hindus who were rapidly gaining the indigenous elite status; as a reaction to Christian missionary criticism of Islam; as a response to British cultural and political hegemony" and most importantly "to lobby for Muslim political rights" (Sen, 1993: 5).

[15] As a result of this, 21 Gandhian organizations were established in different parts of India. Some of these are – Gandhi Niketan Ashram in Madurai (1940), Kasturba Seva Mandir in Punjab (1943), Navajeevan

India's nationalist movement was thus a hothouse of association-forming activism (Jenkins, 2005) and civil associational life was a combined product of the rise of nationalist aspirations, colonial social reform policies, and Gandhian ideology.

Civil society movements in Rajasthan were similarly a product of the anti-colonial nationalist struggle led by the educated middle class. Rajasthan was constituted of 22 semi-sovereign princely states and chiefdoms, which enjoyed considerable amount of autonomy from the colonial rule.[16] It was ruled by the upper caste feudal elites (*Zamidars* and *Jagirdars*). Due to its autonomy from British rule, Rajasthan initially remained isolated from the nationalist movement. However, Dayananda Saraswati's visit to the State during June 1865 injected the people with nationalist fervor and brought changes in the socio-political life of Rajasthan. His ideas of *swadharma* (own religion), *swarajya* (own state), *swadeshi* (indigenous), and *swabhasa* (own language) had significant impact on the people in Rajasthan (Mathur, 1987: 16).

This effort was further strengthened by the educated middle class. They played an important role in mobilizing the marginalized against the feudal forces, who were the political allies of the colonial power in the princely state of Rajasthan. They started several newspapers, formed various civil associations and took the leadership of various people's movements. Leaders like V.S. Pathik, M.L. Verma, A.L. Sethi, Thakur K.S. Bharat, R.N. Chaudhury and H. Upadhyaya guided the Bijolia and Begu peasant movements. Similarly, Motilal Tejawat led the *Ekiya Andolan* (1921-1929) against the oppressive feudal lords in south Rajasthan and became popular among the tribals as

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Mandal in Orissa (1946), Gram Nirman Mandir (1951), Shram Bharati and Gram Bharati Sarvodaya in Bihar (1952), Raniparaj Seva Sabha in Gujarat (1952), and Kerala Gandhi Smarak Nidhi (1957), and so on (Sooryamoorthy and Gangrade, 2001: 47).

[16] There were some 565 princely states which the British exercised the paramountcy without actually incorporating those territories into the process of British India (Chatterjee, 1997b: 1-2).

"Mewar Gandhi".[17] In Jodhpur, J.N. Vyas led the people's movement and became popularly known as the *Master Sahib* for his teachings to the youth. Lawyer Raghuvar Dayal in Bikaner, Master Bhola Nath in Alwar and G.B. Bhatt in Sirohi led several such movements in different parts of Rajasthan (Mathur, 1987: 16).

V.S. Pathik and his colleagues, following the advice of Gandhi, established Rajasthan Seva Sangh at Wardha in 1919 and later shifted to Ajmer in 1920. These organizations played significant role not only in educating people about the rampant injustice, grinding poverty and exploitation of the peasantry but also created political consciousness and guided the peasant movements in Rajasthan. Under the editorship of Pathik, Rajasthan Seva Sangh started newspapers like *Rajasthan Keshari* in 1920 from Wardha, and weekly *Naveen Rajasthan* in 1922 from Ajmer. Later on in 1923, *Naveen Rajasthan* was banned by the British government and was restarted in the name of *Tarun Rajasthan* (Mathur, 1987: 22). These newspapers played a major role in exposing feudal oppression and in advocating peasant grievances in Rajasthan.

In 1924, R.N. Chaudhury and Shobhalal Gupta were arrested for publishing seditious material in *Tarun Rajasthan.* Though R.N. Chaudhury was acquitted, Shobhalal Gupta was sentenced to two years of imprisonment (Jain, 1993: 172). Despite such strict measures, the 1920s and 1930s witnessed the growth of several newspapers that spread political consciousness and radicalized the nationalist movement in Rajasthan. R.D. Mehta started a weekly called *Rajasthan* from Bewar in 1923 and H.B. Upadhyaya published *Tyag Bhumi* in 1927 from Ajmer, which preached Gandhian ideology and generated political consciousness among the masses in Rajasthan. Leading industrialists

[17] Although Motilal's movement was non-violent, the activities of the Jagirdars often incited the tribals to indulge in a few stray incidents of violence, for which Gandhi did not support Motilal and disowned him (see Hardiman, 2007; Mathur, 1995; Sharma, 1996).

of Rajasthan like Damodar Das Rathi and Jamnalal Bajaj provided financial help to some of these nationalist newspapers, institutions and social workers.

Gandhi and his ideology influenced the origin of various nationalist organizations, including Rajasthan Seva Sangh and Rajputana Madhya Bharat Sabha. Many of his supporters established voluntary associations to advocate for the cause of poor peasantry, to spearhead constructive social work and to lead the nationalist movement. *Praja Mandal* movements also started spreading in different parts of Rajasthan, i.e. Marwar (1934), Bharatpur (1937), Jaipur (1938) Mewar (1938) and Bikaner (1944). These movements "all identified with the nationalist symbols and aspirations as expressed by the Indian National Congress and conceived their activity as a part of the larger effort to displace colonial rule" (Sisson, 1972: 66).

According to Rajvansi (n.d: 15), "there was not much of a tradition of NGO work in Rajasthan in the days of 'Rajas' and 'Maharajas'. Feudal rule was not despotic, but did not encourage the spirit of voluntarism". Voluntary organization for nationalist mobilization in Rajasthan was first started by reform leaders like Swami Dayananda Saraswati and Gandhians like V.S. Pathik who came from other states. Some others who spearheaded voluntary activities were the young urban middle class youth from Rajasthan who were studying outside the state (Rajvansi, n.d: 15).[18]

These leaders recognized education as the single most important medium to improve the lives of the downtrodden in the feudal state of Mewar and, thus, established several educational institutions. A.L. Sethi, who received a B.A degree from Allahabad in

[18] Naresh Bhargava, a retired professor of Sociology at the Sukhadia University (Udaipur), declared that "…actually there were some kinds of leadership who were studying outside of Rajasthan; they got certain kind of training in the Congress movement and when they returned to Rajasthan they started these activities" (Interview, 4 November 2006).

1902, came back to Jaipur, Rajasthan in 1906 and started *Vardhaman Vidyalaya* under the Jain Education Society of India. Also Dr. Mohan Singh Mehta, who was educated outside Rajasthan, founded the Vidya Bhawan Society in Udaipur in 1931.

According to a study conducted by PRADAN (1996: 12), Vidya Bhawan Society is "the oldest" voluntary organization in Rajasthan "independent of the political process", which was established with the objective of imparting adult education in Udaipur. The second NGO of Rajasthan called the Lok Kala Mandal that was also established in Udaipur in the 1930s. Some other organizations, which emerged during the time to spread education among the masses, were – the Marwar Muslim Education Society in 1929 in Jodhpur, Rajasthan Vidyapeeth Kul in 1937 by Janardan Rai Nagar in Udaipur, and Lok Bharati Pratisthan in 1942 and Mahila Vidya Mandir in 1946 in Chittorgarh.

South Rajasthan, especially Udaipur, thus, emerged as the epicenter of voluntary activities in Rajasthan during the colonial period, where the educated middle class played a major role not just in the spread of anti-colonial and anti-feudal nationalist feelings but also in the educational and economic development of the tribal and peasant communities.

3.3: Civil Society in Post-Colonial India

3.3.1: *The Period of Nehru (1947- 64)*

Following the end of colonial rule, a democratic state was established in India inspired by the principles of Western modernity such as liberal democracy, universal adult suffrage, democratic decision-making, and modern citizenship. The Congress party which came to power in the post-colonial period portrayed itself as "the only secular party with a

national constituency representing the interests of all social groups, including the poor and minorities" (Frankel, 2000a: 236).

Although the Congress party began as an organization of anglicized regional elites, it had eventually been transformed by Mahatma Gandhi from an elite organization to an open and inclusive mass-based political party by incorporating the peasantry, labour, Muslims and other minority groups to create a viable national movement (Rudolph and Rudolph, 1987: 127; Mehta, 1992: 537). Nehru, moreover, established a welfare-oriented interventionist state that was influenced by Soviet Socialism and British Fabianism and was grounded on the notion of constitutional rights, entitlements and social justice.[19] The Nehruvian state was designed to act as a "benevolent Leviathan" chartered to serve the public interest by providing an extensive array of public goods and free basic social services (Fuller and Harriss, 2000: 3).[20]

It is in this direction, the so called "high-modernist" ideology of development was adopted as the crucial legitimizing principle for state intervention in a society affected by mass poverty and backwardness (Chatterjee, 1997b: 8-9; Ludden, 1992; Sinha, 2003).[21] The dominant belief was that a "strong state was the only way a mass society which was largely illiterate and poor, which held strong ethnic and caste loyalties and was hence 'incapable' of thinking for the country, could be adequately governed" (Kamat, 2002: 8).

[19] The establishment of a comprehensive Constitution not only ensured individual rights and freedom but also encouraged people to relate each other open-endedly without exclusion, and thus, provided the foundation for a liberal civil society in India (see Jenkins, 2005; Rudolph and Rudolph, 2003).

[20] At the time of Independence, the debate over the direction of Indian society and economy centered on three visions: (1) Gandhian *Swaraj* (rural, self-sufficient, village-based economy and polity), (2) Nehruvian socialism, and centralized planning and modernization, and (3) Vallabhbai Patel's liberal-capitalist vision. Although Nehru's vision was adopted as the basis for post-colonial state-building, others were not completely rejected (Riley, 2002: 35).

[21] According to Scott (1998: 4-5), high Modernism refers to a strong confidence in the progress of science, control and mastery over nature, and rational planning of the social order to improve the human condition.

Rudolph and Rudolph (1987) argue that such cultural drive behind India's high "stateness" comes from pre-colonial imperial tradition.

Besides this, it is worth noting here that India experienced large-scale Hindu-Muslim conflict at the onset of independence that resulted in the partition of the country into the Muslim dominated Islamic state of Pakistan and the Hindu dominated but secular India. It has been estimated that 600,000 to one million people were killed in this communal violence (Frankel, 2000b: 6). According to Brass (2000), it was not just the Hindu-Muslim communalism but also the "fear of disorder" that resulted in the establishment of strong centralized state in India. In addition to partition, this fear arose from acts of violence carried out by militant Hinduism (killing of Mahatma Gandhi by Hindu nationalists), regional secessionism (linguistic division of states) and revolutionary communism (tribal and peasant's movements in Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, etc.) (Brass, 2000; see also Frankel, 2000b: 7).

According to Chatterjee (1997b: 12), the Nehruvian state in India took the form of a "developmental state", intervening in the economy, planning and guiding its growth and trying directly to promote the welfare of the population.[22] It essentially assumed the role of "protector" as well as "modernizer and liberator", and was committed to the task of poverty reduction and human development (Nandy, 2002: 39-42). Kothari (2001) has referred to this Nehruvian state as a "moderate state" because despite its powerful tendency towards centralization and homogenization, it acted as an instrument of social justice and human freedom.

[22] Chatterjee's idea of developmental state is different from that of Leftwich, who has used the term in the context of East Asian countries. According to Leftwich, the developmental state refers to states which are "dominated by developmental elites, political and bureaucratic, which use their authority and autonomy from dominant social forces to aggressively pursue developmental objectives. Democracy here is weak if not non-existent and civil society is deliberately weakened through repression" (see Jayal & Pai, 2001: 16).

Under the leadership of Nehru, the Congress party served as a unique integrating institutional link between the state and society in India; it represented the interests of different social groups and provided a secular and socialist model of nation-building. The Nehruvian secular nationalism, which became the "official ideology" of the post-colonial Indian state, propagated and practiced the idea of *vasudhaiba kutumbakam* (world as a family) and *dharma nirapekshata* (religious neutrality). All religions (as well as language and ethnic groups) enjoyed equal status and none either determined citizenship or dominated the functioning of the state (Varshney, 1998). By propagating the secular ideology, which intended to "reassure the religious minorities that they would be secure in the newly independent state", the Congress party established itself as the legitimate guardian of the Indian state (Seshia, 1998: 1039).

The Gandhian principle of *swaraj* and self-reliance also had a major influence on Nehru and the post-colonial state-building in India. Although the Congress leaders rejected Gandhiji's call for disbanding the INC and transforming it into a Lok Sevak Sangh (a voluntary grassroots movement on behalf of the weak and oppressed), they followed his idea of "constructive work" to create self-reliant, self-governing and self-sufficient village communities (Kothari, 1988: 74). A Planning Commission was established and an increasingly centralized, top-down approach towards rural development was followed through Five Year Plans (Webster, 1995: 409). Community Development Programmes and national extension services were introduced in October 1952 to approach the needs and aspirations of the people in countryside.

At the same time many voluntary groups had sprung up in various parts of the country influenced by the Gandhian perspective for national reconstruction. They became

active in constructive work such as basic education, health, removal of untouchability and welfare of the rural society. These organizations were promoted in the first Five Year Plan, and as a result, the Gandhi Peace Foundation was conceived by Gandhi Smarak Nidhi in 1955 with ten million rupees sanctioned from the government to promote Gandhian values. The Association of Voluntary Agencies for Rural Development (AVARD) was set up in 1958 to provide a national platform for organizations involved in community and rural development activities. Panchayati Raj Institutions were introduced in 1959 to create self-reliant and self-governing village structure.

The state formed the Central Social Welfare Board (CSWB) in 1953 and the State Social Welfare Advisory Boards a year later to promote and channel grant-in-aid programmes to the Gandhian NGOs. In 1953, the government had set aside 30 million rupees to channel through the CSWB (Sen, 1993: 9). It also established the Khadi and Village Industries Corporation to finance NGOs active in promoting *khadi* (hand-woven cloth) and village industries for the betterment of rural poor (Sen, 1999: 335). The state subsequently increased the funding for NGOs in Five Year plans. In the first Five Year plan (1951-56) the state had allocated Rs. 70 million for 2128 NGOs; it increased to Rs. 233 million for about 6000 NGOs in the second Five Year plan (1956-61). But in the third Five Year plan, the state could fund only 5000 NGOs because of an economic crisis that had shrunk the welfare budget (Kudva, 2005: 241).

The state thus acted as the major agency of promotion, regulation and funding of NGOs. After independence, the Indian state, owing to its commitment to Gandhian ideals, promoted the activities of Gandhian organizations. They continued to work closely with the government in the areas of agricultural extension, animal husbandry,

health, education, cooperative, poultry, fishery, and *khadi* and village industries. The NGOs had thus been incorporated as "silent partners" into the state structure and acted as its implementing agencies. The state played a paternalistic role and oversaw the activities of the NGOs who "largely served to provide *welfare and relief*" (Kudva, 2005: 240). Considering such special provisions of the state towards Gandhian NGOs, many have argued that this was an alternative reward given to the Gandhians who did not or could not join the party that they helped to gain state power (Sen, 1993: 9; Kothari, 1988).

The community development programmes, which aimed to raise the socio-economic status of the rural poor, were effectively captured by rural elites and members of dominant castes. The numbers of the Gandhian NGOs were also very limited. While some NGOs were formed on the basis of Gandhian ideology, others were formed by the middle class for more pragmatic reasons. As Sen (1993: 10) has noted, the emergence of NGOs in the 1960s and 1970s was conceivably due to the lack of jobs among the educated youth and the NGO sector provided a source of employment. Therefore, civil society, in which NGOs are a significant player, was limited to the educated elites, and did not move beyond the elite sphere to include the illiterate and the so called un-modern public during the early phases of post-colonial period.

There could be four interrelated reasons that closed the "space" for public participation and maintained an elitist and exclusionary civil society. These were (1) the legacy of colonialism, (2) the development of a strong welfare-oriented state, (3) a failed revolutionary communist movement, and (4) the exclusion of the common people from the public sphere on the basis of standards set by the virtues of modernity.

With regard to the first factor, Kaviraj (2001) has explained that there was the widespread belief that it was largely the modern elites who mobilized the masses against the tyranny of the colonial state. Thus, the immense power of the post-colonial state was not perceived to be an inheritance from the colonial period but the result of successful nationalist mass mobilization by educated elites. Indian nationalism's seemingly democratic and egalitarian ideology contributed to this widespread belief. Thus, any groups that spoke about restricting the new nation-state's powers could be vulnerable to accusations of disloyalty to the nationalist cause (*ibid*.: 314).

Secondly, state elites not only presided over the public and political apparatus but also controlled the social, economic, educational, health, and cultural instruments of governance. In other words, these elites not only controlled the state but also society by assuming the welfarist responsibility for the development of society. The state also followed a paternalistic, top-down approach to economic development through its Five Year Plans, which prevented the participation of the common public in decision-making process. As Alam (2005: 3) has pointed out, "post-colonial democracy in India began as a tryst between the elites and the masses where the masses were promised of welfare and in return delegated the elites the power to rule". It was through development and welfare programmes, the post-colonial state and the upper caste/class elites created consent and drew their legitimacy from the populations in society (Sivaramakrishnan and Agrawal, 2003: 39). The general belief among the people was that the state knows the best way to govern its citizens (Ludden, 1992: 273). The citizenry ultimately became passive and depoliticized, which created an illusion of consensus that an active civil society distinct from the state was unnecessary (Kaviraj, 2001: 315).

Thirdly, the confinement of civil society to the elite sphere was due to the suppression of several communist movements by the state in the early years of post-colonial period, especially between 1948 and 1951. This period witnessed increasing violent peasant and tribal agitation in the coastal and Telangana districts of Andhra Pradesh, in northern Maharashtra, in Punjab, in Uttar Pradesh, in Bihar and in West Bengal (Kamat, 2002: 10). Such violent movements were perceived as threats to the law and order as well as the stability of the newly independent Indian state. Considering this, the Congress led Indian state used force to suppress the mass based communist and militant peasant and tribal mobilizations in different states. The Communist party workers were either killed or forced underground. In addition to this, "the splits in the Communist party, which gave rise to the Marxist-Leninist and Maoist factions, also pre-empted the maturation of poor peasant organizations across the countryside" (*ibid.*).

The final reason was more contradictory to the very nature of citizenship rights ensured by the Constitution and democratic state. Although the Indian Constitution and laws had guaranteed that every citizen had certain basic rights, in actuality, the declaration that the people of India had all become citizens of the republic was only a constitutional fiction (Chatterjee, 1998a). Most of the inhabitants were deprived of exercising such rights due to the pervasiveness of various traditional exploitative and exclusive practices. For example, the lower caste people were excluded from the mainstream life of the village and forced to live as untouchables.

Such discriminatory practices prevented the lower-caste people from participating in the political realm, and established them as "exiled citizens" or "stigmatized citizens" (Guru, 2005: 267; Sahoo, 2006; 2008a). The domain of civil society was restricted to a

fairly small section of what may be called "proper citizens" (Chatterjee, 1998c: 11).[23] Not only caste, but also gender, tribe, religion, property and education were the other basis of exclusion, inequality and exercise of power in India. Thus, the public sphere, which was imbued with the ideology of purity-pollution and other sectarian values, failed to include the so-called non-modern public in the sphere of civil society in India.

3.3.2: *The Regime of Indira Gandhi (1967-77)*

This section discusses the emergence of mass based civil society beyond the elite sphere in India. It is argued in this section that the expansion of civil society was largely a result of and a response to Mrs Gandhi's Emergency rule, which was a corollary of the failure of development planning as well as the decline of political institutions in India. According to Kothari (2001), this was the period, which witnessed the "decline of the [Nehruvian] moderate state" in India, and the Indian state moved away from the pluralistic and inclusive model of politics followed by the Congress party till the 1960s.

During the period of Nehru, the Congress party had established strong patronage links with the local feudal lords and traditional elites, who enjoyed considerable autonomy and authority, and acted as the mobilizing agency for the Congress party at the grassroots level. However, the rule of Indira Gandhi witnessed increasing centralization and personalization of authority. She ignored the mediating patronage structures at different levels of the country and established direct links with the masses, which brought

[23] Chatterjee distinguishes between two domains: one of sovereignty and the other of governmentality, corresponding respectively to a discourse of rights and a discourse of policy. The first domain speaks the moral language of modernity – of reason, science, autonomy, self-representation, equal rights and citizenship. The other domain speaks the economic language of policy – of utility, well-being, efficiency, cost and benefits. The first is inhabited by citizens and the other by populations dependent upon the welfare programmes of the state (Chatterjee, 2004).

her popularity (Manor, 1980; Hewitt, 2008). She used this popular electoral base as a power resource to make key political appointments. More and more individuals, both in the party and in the government, were *appointed* rather than *elected* to power (Kohli, 2000: 210). In order to establish authority, Mrs Gandhi changed several Chief Ministers at will, and also shuffled and reshuffled the state ministries.[24]

Following this, State party organizations lost their political autonomy and legislatures virtually became defunct (Chatterjee, 1997a: 62; Kohli, 2000: 210; Hasan, 2000). Increasing central intervention into state affairs furthered regionalism and independence of the States through encouraging active non-compliance and resistance (Hewitt, 2008: 18-9). For example, identity-based secessionist movements in many regions, especially in Punjab, Kashmir and Assam, threatened the centralized system of political authority in India, and demanded greater autonomy within the framework of what might be called "state-nations" (Frankel, 2000b: 8; Jayal and Pai, 2001: 12).

In addition to this, there was also increasing discontent among the rich peasantry or surplus producers who, despite of having been benefited from the land reforms, green revolution, community development programmes and the networks of cooperatives, were disappointed by what the Congress was willing to offer, and was more than willing to desert it for a coalition of opposition parties (Hasan, 2000: 19). As a result, the Congress faced an electoral debacle in 1967 in nine large states of India such as Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Orissa, Tamilnadu and Kerala. Furthermore, there was increasing conflict among the leaders within the Congress party.

[24] Between 1968 and 1989, there were as many as 14 Congress ministries in Bihar with nine different Chief Ministers; in UP, between 1970 and 1988, there were ten Congress ministries and seven Chief Ministers; in Maharashtra, between 1975 and 1988, there were eight Congress ministries and five Chief Ministers; in Andhra Pradesh, between 1971 and 1982, there were six Congress Chief Ministers (Chatterjee, 1997b: 22).

Following the electoral debacle and the increasing intra-party conflict, Indira Gandhi decided to break decisively from her old patrons and formed her own Congress (I) party in 1969. The situation was aggravated by rising prices, food shortages, industrial stagnation, unemployment, and widespread corruption in the government (Hasan, 2000: 19; Mukherji, 2009). Social unrest mounted through out India and the discontented groups like municipal and industrial workers as well as poor and landless took to the streets. In order to increase productivity and achieve self-sufficiency in food production, Mrs Gandhi followed capitalist mode of production in agriculture by introducing technological changes, fertilizer and high yielding variety of seeds, which brought "green revolution" in India. Though this policy increased agricultural production, it only benefited the rich peasantry; and as a result, inequality in rural areas drastically increased.

Patnaik and Patnaik (2001: 46-47) have argued that the failure of development in India was not because of the state's *dirigiste* or the so called "inward-looking" strategy but because of its attempt to promote capitalist development *without any significant land reforms,* which necessarily meant a narrow base of capitalist development in the countryside confined only to the upper caste landlords and rich peasants. In 1967, drawing on supports from students, peasants and tribals, Maoist-style Naxalite movements began to intensify against the feudal lords in the countryside especially in the states of West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Tamilnadu, Kerala and Bihar (Hasan, 2000: 19).

Rajasthan also had a feudal history where the peasants were forced to pay excessively high amount of taxes to the *jagirdars* (landlords). At the time of Rajasthan's creation, this *jagirdari* system covered some 60 to 80% of the total area of the state (RHDR, 2006: 240). The *jagirdars* not only enjoyed power and privilege and resorted to

endless exploitation they also did not perform any useful service for their people. As a result, the relationship between tenants and the *jagirdars* were quite strained in the state (Sharma, 1993: 13).

Following independence, the Central Government appointed a Jagir Enquiry Committee in 1949, which recommended the inevitable abolition of *jagirdari* system in Rajasthan. The Congress government in India, under the leadership of Nehru, also passed land reform policies and took important steps to abolish the feudal system.

Consequently, several land reform acts were passed in Rajasthan, which abolished the *jagirdari* system and recognized the rights of the tenants. Despite this, some form of feudal exploitation continued to exist in the tribal areas of Rajasthan. Inspired by the Naxalbari uprising[25] of 1967, a group of communist revolutionaries became determined to free the backward and exploited tribals of the region from economic and socio-political tyranny. They worked mainly in Dungarpur district and Kherwada part of Udaipur district, where they launched a struggle against the rapacious hold of moneylenders who were supported by the police and who had control over adivasi lands through highly usurious mortgages (Swaminadhan, 1997). They called for reclaiming the tribal land as well as cutting and keeping the harvest instead of depositing with the landlords.

However, this movement was suppressed by the state and many of its activists went either to jail or underground. As a result of this, Left struggle for the tribals in south Rajasthan collapsed. It later reemerged in the form of the Rajasthan Peasant's Union in 1980 to organize tribal peasants; but without a solid political agenda the movement could

[25] The term Naxalite comes from Naxalbari, a small village in West Bengal, where a section of CPI (M) led by Charu Majumdar and Kanu Sanyal led violent uprisings of peasants and tribals to overthrow the government and upper classes whom they held responsible for their plight. They did not believe in parliamentary democracy, but instead was committed to fermenting a revolution by following a "Maoist" strategy of "armed struggle" (Kohli, 1990: 279).

not be sustained. In 1991, the split in the top leadership of Communist Organization of India brought further setbacks (Swaminadhan, 1997). Furthermore, "communist" was a dirty word in Rajasthan where there was very little industry and hardly any working class. These factors combined to cause the failure of Left movement, and hence a mass based civil society in Rajasthan.

In late 1960s, Mrs. Gandhi introduced several pro-poor policies like *Garibi Hatao* (Remove Poverty) programme in response to urban working class agitation against price rise and unemployment as well as against the sporadic rebellions in the country side.[26] She continued her reforms by nationalizing banks, by abolishing privy purses of India's princes and by restricting the fundamental right to hold property through constitutional amendments. Though these policies brought Mrs Gandhi electoral success in 1971, in the process, the Congress party was reduced into an instrument for winning elections (Gupta, 1997: 325). She strengthened her popular base among the poor and marginalized who believed that "Indira is India, and India is Indira".

However, the long term effect of such strategy was heavy. Metcalf and Metcalf (2006: 254) have pointed out three basic consequences of such populist politics during "Indira Raj": (1) inauguration of populist authoritarianism or plebiscitary democracy where the peasantry was mobilized directly, rather than through the local notables and feudal lords who previously acted as the vote brokers for the Congress party, (2) devaluation of the Congress party at all levels and the eventual erosion of its base in the countryside, and finally (3) the rising expectations of the poor leading to over-

[26] In newspaper dailies, *Garibi Hatao* (remove poverty) was sarcastically referred to as *Garib Hatao* (remove the poor), referring to Indira Gandhi's coercive family planning and slum clearance programme.

politicization of society and the mobilization of many groups that could not be satisfied due to the absence of requisite institutional mechanisms and resources.

Mrs Gandhi's tenure witnessed highly centralized, autocratic, and confrontational style of personal rule. Added to this, a series of corruption scandals involving high ranking bureaucrats, cabinet ministers and prominent Congress chief ministers, first in Bihar and then in Gujarat, were exposed. The civil service and the bureaucracy became corrupt and politicized (Mathur, 2001: 122-25). The state turned into a "weak Leviathan" (Mamdani, 1996: 11). Its capacity to govern began to decline with the progressive deinstitutionalization of the "Congress system", most visibly through corruption scandals and ineffectiveness in enforcing the rule of law, on the one hand and the growing radicalism at the bottom expressed through the demands of the electorate to transform the nature of the Indian state. This "resulted in institutional decay and the substantial erosion of the legitimacy of political authority" (Jayal and Pai, 2001: 13).

The decline of the Congress resulted in, what Sheth (1991) has called, "crisis of representation". New "demand groups" entered the political arena and pressed new claims upon the state (Rudolph and Rudolph, 1987; Kohli, 1990).[27] They also challenged the authority of the state on the issues of its incapability to deal with law and order, corruption, and poverty. Without a dominant party and conflict-resolving institutions, democratic accommodation of such demands became difficult and without established law-and-order institutions, there was an increase in agitation and political violence in India. Due to increasing corruption, centralization and bureaucratization, the policies of developmental planning failed to reach the poor and marginalized.

[27] Demand groups differ from organized associations with permanent institutions and fixed interests in that they are issue oriented and tend to employ agitational methods to achieve their goals (Rudolph and Rudolph, 1987: 15; see also Gupta, 1989: 789).

It was in this period Seva Mandir was established (in 1966-67) by Dr. Mohan Singh Mehta, a Gandhian and renowned Indian administrator, in Rajasthan as a response to the failure of developmental planning. In the 1970s, Rajasthan was one of the most backward and poverty-ridden states of India. Even until 1981, 54% of its population lived below the poverty line, and until 1991, only 39% of its populations were literate.

Although in the early post-independence period Rajasthan experienced Gandhian "sarvodaya" movement in certain pockets and witnessed the growth of some *khadi* and village industries, it was Seva Mandir which was formed as the first grassroots supports organization in Rajasthan to address the problems of rural poor and tribal populations in Udaipur (PRADAN, 1996). Besides Seva Mandir, NGOs like the Social Work and Research Centre (SWRC) in Ajmer, the Urmul Trust in Bikaner, the Cecoedecon in Jaipur, and the Gramin Vigyan Vikash Samiti in Jodhpur emerged in the early 1970s to initiate the NGO movement in Rajasthan (Bhargava, 2007: 260; RHDR, 2002: 20).

The growing populist politics, increasing corruption scandals, and worsening economic situation during the period of Mrs. Gandhi was vehemently protested by Jayaprakash Narayan (JP), a Gandhian who had renounced political office in order to serve the poor and dispossessed. He emerged from political retirement to mobilize the impoverished rural and low caste masses against the upper caste bureaucratic and landlord elites in his home state in Bihar; and to urge the Gandhian workers, NGOs, students, and trade union leaders to become a part of the non-violent struggle against the government, which became popularly known as *Sampurna Kranti* or "total revolution". The RSS, the BJS, and other Hindu fundamentalist organizations constituted major components of JP's struggle against the corrupt and authoritarian rule of Indira Gandhi.

JP was also joined by another Gandhian called Morarji Desai who mobilized the middle classes in his home state of Gujarat. All the Gandhian organizations, including the Gandhi Peace Foundation, protested Mrs. Gandhi's authoritarian rule. The AVARD also mobilized around three hundred Gandhian organizations against the Emergency rule (Kudva, 2005: 243). The country witnessed an upsurge in the number of strikes, marches, fasts and sit-ins. Eventually the state's capacity to govern began to decline and the state suffered from both a "crisis of legitimacy" and a "crisis of governability" (Kohli, 1990).[28]

Matters aggravated on 12 June 1975 when Allahabad High Court declared Mrs Gandhi's winning in 1971 election as tainted by corrupt practices, and therefore invalid. Added to this, it was on the same day Mrs Gandhi received the news of Congress party's electoral defeat in the state of Gujarat. On 24 June, "the opposition organized in large part by the RSS and the BJS party held a mass rally and called upon the police and the army to disobey orders emanating from a corrupt and illegitimately constituted prime minister" (Hewitt, 2008: 16). With the fear of being deposed, Mrs. Gandhi, instead of resigning, imposed the Emergency rule on 26 June 1975 that lasted for 21 months (Metcalf and Metcalf, 2006: 255; Hewitt, 2008: 16-7).

In Rajasthan, the main challenge to the Congress politics came from the BJS led by Bhairon Singh Shekhawat and the Swatantra party led by Rajmata Gayatri Devi of Jaipur. Although in the 1967 state election the BJS and the Swatantra party alliance reached near majority by winning 22 and 49 seats respectively, they could not form the government (Gupta and Navneeth, 1968: 1482; see Table 3.1).

[28] According to Kohli (1990), the Congress party had played a crucial role in making India governable in three basic ways: (1) by providing a framework of institutions to arbitrate amongst and reconcile various interests, (2) by providing a legitimizing ideology around which a national consensus could be built, and (3) by weaving the diverse regional elements that constituted India into the fabric of a consolidated nation without incurring the kind of backlash that recent centralization tendencies have evoked (see Mehta, 1992).

Table 3.1: Party Position in Rajasthan Assembly Elections: 1952-2003

Name of Party	1952	1957	1962	1967	1972	1977	1980	1985	1990	1993	1998	2003
Congress	102 (39.71)	119 (45.13)	88 (39.98)	89 (41.41)	145 (51.14)	41 (31.41)	139 (48.55)	113 (46.79)	50 (33.64)	76 (38.27)	150 (44.95)	56 (35.65)
Jan Sangh/ Janata Party	11 (6.35)	6 (5.55)	15 (9.14)	22 (11.70)	8 (12.20)	150 (50.41)	--	--	--	--	--	--
BJP	--	--	--	--	--	--	32 (18.60)	38 (21.16)	85 (25.25)	96 (38.60)	33 (33.23)	120 (39.20)
CPI/CPM	0 (0.59)	1 (3.02)	5 (5.40)	1 (2.15)	4 (2.52)	2 (1.87)	2 (2.17)	1 (1.79)	1 (1.88)	1 (1.24)	1 (1.01)	1 (0.96)
Ram Rajya Parishad	24 (11.44)	17 (9.89)	3 (2.01)	--	--	--	---	--	--	--	--	--
Swatantra Party	--	--	36 (17.11)	49 (22.46)	11 (12.32)	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Independents	39 (28.05)	32 (33.93)	22 (20.88)	15 (16.55)	11 (17.36)	6 (15.92)	12 (13.10)	9 (11.57)	9 (17.14)	21 (2.16)	7 (14.41)	13 (11.37)
Other Parties	14 (13.86)	1 (2.48)	7 (15.48)	8 (5.73)	5 (4.46)	0 (0.39)	15 (17.58)	37 (18.69)	55 (22.09)	6 (19.73)	6 (6.4)	10 (12.82)
Total Assembly Seats	190	176	176	184	184	199	200	198	200	200	197	200
Ruling Political Party	INC	INC	INC	INC	INC	Janata Party	INC	INC	BJP	BJP	INC	BJP

Source: Election Department (2004) *12th Vidhan Sabha General Election 2003*, Management of Election and Statistical Information, Rajasthan.

N.B.: (Figures within the brackets refer to the percentage of votes obtained by the party);
Janata Party came to power in Rajasthan only in 1977.

In 1972, the Congress returned to power once again in Rajasthan following India's victory against Pakistan in the 1971 war. But, Shekhawat's resistance to Indira Gandhi's Emergency rule made him immensely popular in Rajasthan. As a result, soon after the Emergency rule, a joint opposition led by the Janata party came to power in Rajasthan. Bhairon Singh Shekhawat became the first non-Congress Chief Minister of the state. This, however, did not last long due to the split of the Janata coalition at the Centre as well as the return of Mrs Gandhi to power in 1980.

Under the Emergency rule, civil and political rights of the citizens were suspended; political activities were banned, free associationalism was cancelled and press censorship was brought into force. Twenty-six political organizations from both Left and Right were banned, including the CPI(M-L) and most other "Naxalite groups", the RSS, the Ananda Marg and the Jamait-e-Islami (Chatterjee, 1997b: 26). Opposition leaders were put in jail and the parliamentary elections set for March 1976 were postponed. The government prohibited the political involvement of voluntary organizations and promoted only the "apolitical NGOs" that are involved in social welfare and service delivery.

The Foreign Contributions Regulation Act of 1976 was enacted in the parliament to maintain surveillance on political associations and voluntary organizations that received foreign funds. Under Section 5 (1) of the FCRA, the government gained the right to deregister organizations of a political nature, not being a political party (Biswas, 2006: 4409; see Table 3.4). Though the functioning of NGOs was restricted, anti-emergency movements gave rise to thousands of grassroots movements that Kothari (1984) has referred to as the "non-party political formations" in the country.[29]

[29] According to Kothari (1984: 219), the historical and ideological context in which "non-party political formations" arise are "where the engines of growth are in decline, the organized working class is not

Indira Gandhi's policies on forced sterilization of the working class men and of minorities (especially Muslims) and repression of the poor through slum clearance programmes also stirred up popular resentment.[30] Emergency Rule for the first time resulted not just in the breakdown of hegemonic elite politics but also in widespread mobilization and politicization of masses in India (Hewitt, 2008: 2). This raised many "voices from below" (Kothari, 1989); and as a result, civil society expanded to include people from all sections, especially the rural population through grassroots movements.

3.3.3: *The Janata Government Period (1977–79)*

The Emergency rule led to the defeat of Mrs. Gandhi in March 1977 election and so the Janata party came to power with Morarji Desai as the Prime Minister. It was not just committed to ending the Emergency rule and restoring a pluralistic socialist democracy in India but also to address the needs of the rural impoverished. As a part of its rural improvement programme, the Janata party, in the sixth Five Year Plan (1980-85), actively encouraged voluntary work and the formation of voluntary organizations in the countryside (Kamat, 2002: 12; see Table 3.4).

The government emphasized on the role of voluntary agencies in citizenship training, health education, family planning, upgrading of vocational skills, physical

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growing, the process of marginalization is spreading, technology is turning anti-people, development has become an instrument of the privileged class, and the state has lost its role as an agent of transformation, or even as a mediator, in the affairs of civil society". Kothari distinguishes the "non-party political formations" from "non-political voluntary agencies" working on various development schemes.

[30] These two policies were implemented by Mrs. Gandhi's younger son Sanjay Gandhi (1947-1980) who received unchecked authority during the Emergency rule. Determined to make Delhi a modern and beautiful city, Sanjay demolished shacks, shops and residential quarters near Jama Masjid, which remained home to large Muslim population and traders, and dislocated perhaps half a million people. He also ordered forced sterilization for men who had more than two children in order to control India's burgeoning population. To meet the high target set, the poor and vulnerable were often dragged off by the police and forcibly sterilized (see Metcalf and Metcalf, 2006: 256).

education and cultural activities. It vastly increased funding and bureaucratic support for the NGOs (Franda, 1979: 182). For example, it allocated Rs. 500 million for NGOs under various ministries and also encouraged private support of them. The government added Section 35 CCA to the Income Tax Act of 1961, which allowed corporations to deduct donations to NGOs from their taxable income (Kudva, 2005: 243). The heavy welfare emphasis of the Janata government's new economic programmes, thus, resulted in the growth of a variety of voluntary organizations in India.

These policies of the Janata government also boosted NGO activity in Rajasthan. It should be remembered here that the RSS and other Hindu nationalist organizations, which were allies of the Janata government, greatly benefitted from its pro-NGO policies. It was during this time the Vanvasi Kalyan Parishad, the tribal welfare wing of the RSS that was confined only to Jashpur district of Madhya Pradesh, expanded its geographical coverage by establishing State-level units, and as a result, it became an all-India organization. In 1978, the Rajasthan branch of the VKP was opened to promote the welfare of the tribal population in Rajasthan. The Janata government in Rajasthan of that time led by Bhairon Singh Shekhawat allocated various developmental projects to the RVKP, which helped it expand its base among the tribal populations. Although Shekhawat's rule did not last long, he returned to power in 1990 under the banner of the BJP and continued to rule till 1998 (see Table 3.1).

3.3.4: *The Return of Indira Gandhi (1980-84)*

Although the Janata government actively promoted NGOs, its policies did not last long. The socialists in the Janata government opposed the "dual membership" of the BJS

members both in Janata party and in the RSS, which brought an end to Janata rule in 1979 (Teltumbde, 2006: 253).[31] Mrs. Gandhi came back to power in the January 1980 parliamentary election and once again began to restrict the functioning of voluntary sector. She amended the FCRA in 1984 making it obligatory for all NGOs receiving foreign funds to register themselves with the Home Ministry, get a foreign contribution account number, receive all donations into that account, and notify the ministry of that number. This act empowered the state to ban any organization from receiving foreign contributions, should the state consider the organization to be political instead of a neutral NGO (Sen, 1993: 12).

Mrs Gandhi also appointed the Kudal Commission in 1981 in retaliation against the Gandhian NGOs, especially the Gandhi Peace Foundation and AVARD, that had actively supported JP during the Emergency rule. The Commission made allegations about missing funds against 945 Gandhian NGOs (Sen, 1993: 12.). The tax exemption given to the corporate organizations for charitable donations was curtailed by the Financial Act of 1983, which resulted in a decline in the corporate donations.[32] The NGO sector during the period of Mrs. Gandhi increasingly became confined to welfare service delivery and apolitical development activities. However, despite such restrictions, this period witnessed the emergence of thousands of informal grassroots organizations and people's movements as a response to the failure of the state and political parties. They also led various political struggles and acted as pressure groups to democratize development and to empower the marginalized (Sheth, 2004).

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[31] Socialist leaders like Raj Narain in the Janata Party raised the issue of "dual membership" and asked the Jan Sangh members in the Janata Party to resign their RSS membership. The RSS declined to resign, and instead, planned several communal riots in Aligarh, Varanasi, Jamshedpur, etc. to display its strength (Teltumbde, 2006: 260, n. 18).

[32] http://www.asianphilanthropy.org/countries/india/policy.html; accessed on 14 January 2008.

With the collapse of the Janata government, some Jan Sanghis founded the BJP on 5th April 1980 as a credible national alternative to the INC. In order to broaden its electoral base, the party attempted to distance itself somewhat from its predecessor, the BJS, whose expansion was constrained because of its preoccupation with linguistic (Hindi) and Brahmanical bias (Seshia 1998: 1039; Jaffrelot 1996: 317).

Following the principles of "Gandhian socialism" and "positive secularism", the BJP envisioned itself as an heir of the Janata party (Jaffrelot 1996: 316; Hansen 1999: 157). It challenged the policies of the INC on three grounds. First, the BJP contended that the Nehruvian economic development undertaken by the INC has threatened Indian culture and should be replaced by Gandhian socialism, which emphasizes on indigenous development. Second, the BJP accused the INC of subverting Indian democracy through both an anti-democratic leadership and political corruption. Third, it argued that the INC had debased the ideology of state secularism as part of its strategy to appease minorities and win votes (Seshia 1998: 1039-40; Jaffrelot 1996: 316; Hansen 1999: 158). Such a cautious moral critique of the Congress management of the state helped the BJP to establish itself as a strong and credible opposition to the INC.

3.3.5: *Rajiv Gandhi and the beginning of Liberalization (1984-91)*

Although the BJP had emerged as a strong opposition, the assassination of Mrs. Gandhi on 31st October 1984 by two of her Shikh guards brought a "sympathy wave" for the Congress party. As a result, her elder son Rajiv Gandhi came to power with a massive electoral majority in the December 1984 parliamentary election. Realizing India's sluggish industrial growth in comparison to other developing countries, he moved away

from the policies of Congress party and her mother, and opened up India's economy to the world capitalist system with the objective to alter its development strategy (Kohli, 2000: 222). He rejected the "license permit Raj"[33], lifted various regulations and opened the economy to foreign investment. He also rejected the strategies of centralization of power and authority adopted by his mother and introduced various decentralized polices.

The sate-led, top-down approach to development and bureaucratic rigidity had failed to achieve the desired goals of development (Harriss, 2001: 26). The government admitted the fact that its delivery mechanism was not effective in meeting the rural poverty. Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi expressed his disappointment that due to corruption and misrule in the political and administrative structure, only Rs. 15 out of Rs. 100 reached the people (Sooryamoorthy and Gangrade, 2001: xi). Therefore, he facilitated NGOs to deliver services and serve as watchdogs. He also encouraged a people-centred and participatory approach to developmental planning and rural reconstruction. Such promotion of voluntary organizations at the same time helped the state to depoliticize development discourse and to suppress the "too political" elements in voluntary space that is necessary for the implementation of liberalization policies, which Rajiv Gandhi's government had begun to follow (Kothari, 1988: 79).

The Planning Commission identified NGOs as effective service delivery mechanisms and active partners in development. The seventh Five Year Plan (1985-1990) thus witnessed a shift from the state-centered, top-down approach of development to civil society-oriented participatory approach of development (Chandhoke, 2005: 1033; see Table 3.4). The Rajiv Gandhi government increased the funds available to NGOs in

[33] A system of allocating industrial and commercial permits to expand or initiate production ventures under government regulations. The term was first used by C. Rajagopalachari in the late 1950s (Das, 2006).

social sector to 2.5 billion rupees, which is five times larger than the assistance provided by the Janata government in the sixth Plan. It is primarily because, as Kothari (1988: 83) has argued, NGOs "provide new corporate and commercial openings that will fit into the government's liberalization plans".

The government also established the Council for Advancement of People's Action and Rural Technology (CAPART) in September 1986 to facilitate NGOs working in the development of under-privileged and socio-economically weaker sections of society.[34] Moreover, it set up an apex national committee, called the Joint Machinery for Government and NGOs, with its secretariat in the National Planning Commission.

Though Rajiv Gandhi was killed during the election campaign by a bomb blast on 21 May 1991, successive governments have continued to recognize the role of NGOs as partners in development because of the belief that NGOs will be effective and efficient public service contractors (Jayal, 2001b: 145). Strategies of people-centred development and political decentralization were promoted. The government passed the 73rd Amendment, which provided constitutional status to the PRIs.

The eighth Five Year Plan (1992-1997) advocated for increasing state-civil society relationship and emphasized that a nation-wide network of NGOs will be created (Sooryamoorthy and Gangrade, 2001: 49). To finance NGOs more effectively, CAPART established 8 regional offices between 1995 and 1999, and today it is a major promoter of rural development in India assisting over 12,000 voluntary organizations.[35] A recent study shows that NGOs receive around 30% of their revenue from the government as

[34] The government of India established CAPART in 1986 by merging two autonomous bodies, namely, People's Action for Development of India formed in 1973 and Council for Advancement of Rural Technology formed in 1983.
[35] http://capart.nic.in/orgn/index.html; accessed on 19 November 2009.

grants (Srivastava and Tandon, 2005: 1949). This shows that the state in India has played an important role in the promotion of NGOs as partners in development.

3.3.6: *Globalization and the Politics of International Aid (1991-97)*

The flexible and favourable policies of the state in India were supplemented by the increasing international development aid, which was guided by the imperialist agenda during the Cold War period. "The Ford Foundation, for example, was pressed into service by the CIA to counter the 'communist threat', by setting up cultural fronts, enlisting the support of prominent anti-left intellectuals, and in India working closely with the Nehruvian regime (itself keen to quell peasant uprisings in Telangana and other places) to co-opt agrarian struggles through community development projects" (Biswas, 2006: 4406). Implementing the same agenda, the World Bank and the IMF also expressed their concerns about third world poverty (Sheth, 2004: 46; Riley, 2002: 16) and believed that the problem lies in the all-powerful states of the third world which are apathetic, clientele-ridden, corrupt, and bureaucratic (Kamat, 2002: 87; Mamdani, 1996: 13; Mosse, 2005b: 9; Chambers 1974; Streeten, 1981; Sinha, 2005: 165).

"Aid agencies", as Dichter (1986) has argued, "believe[d] that finding ways to alter host country policies is crucial to effective development work in the third world" (cited in Riley, 2002: 13). Corruption in the government was recognized as the major factor for the increasing poverty and failure of development in the third world; and hence, direct aid to committed citizens engaged in community development was regarded as highly efficacious option for realizing the development objectives of the third world

(Kamat, 2002: 17; Kothari, 1988: 73). This was also, as Harriss (2007) has noted, a part of the neo-liberal agenda of reducing the role of the state in economy and society.

India adopted the structural adjustment policies of the World Bank and IMF in 1991, which brought two significant changes in the political life of the nation: (1) rolling back of the state from many areas of welfare, which necessarily involved its declining interest in the poor;[36] and (2) state partnership with organizations in civil society, market and other transnational organizations, which resulted in pluralization of state apparatus (Chandhoke, 2003a; Jayal and Pai, 2001).

Following the conditionalities, India agreed to promote the NGO sector and limit the forms of "oppositional civil society" as a part of the global agenda of good governance (Jenkins, 2001; Sinha, 2005; Coelho, 2005; see Table 3.4).[37] The first significant shift in this direction came in March 1994, when the Planning Commission drafted an action plan to encourage government-NGO partnership for better management of development programmes.

However, the flow of foreign funds to NGOs has received heavy criticisms from the Left and the Right wing political parties and organizations. For the Left, this is another form of Western imperialism to subvert the spread of Marxism in the third world. According to Prakash Karat (1985), a member of the politburo of CPI-M, "voluntary organizations/action groups are part of a strategic design to penetrate Indian society and influence its course of development". He further notes that "by providing liberal funds to these groups, imperialism has created avenues to penetrate directly the vital sections of

[36] For example, Coelho (2005) has shown that World Bank's aid conditionalities have forced Indian state to withdraw itself from public service delivery and to commercialize its Metro water management in Chennai.
[37] B.L. Singhvi, a member of Rajasthan CPI (M) rightly notes that although NGOs are involved in tribal development their networks and strategies are very different. Their involvement has, in the process, pacified the fire within people and depoliticized development at the grassroots (Interview, 28 Nov. 2007).

Indian society and simultaneously use this movement as a vehicle to counter and disrupt the potential of Left movement" (*ibid.*).

Following Karat's argument, it can be said that one of the reasons for the failure of Left movement in the tribal dominated south Rajasthan, which started during the Naxalbari uprising in 1967, is the widespread NGO activity in the region. As Arvind Tejawat, a student from Rajasthan at the Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi, rightly noted, "if NGOs had not been working in Udaipur, it would have long turned into a Naxalite belt as seen in other parts of India like Orissa and Andhra Pradesh".[38]

Similarly, the Right wing organizations like the RSS and the RVKP have argued that foreign aid will lead not just to the furthering of anti-Hindu agendas of Christian, Islamic and communist organizations but also to the cultural subordination of the Indian state (Biswas, 2006: 4407). However, some have defended foreign funding on the ground that even Mahatma Gandhi received funds from corporate houses like the Tatas and Birlas for his movement work (Kamat, 2002: 23; see also Sethi, 1984).

According to data, in 1984, foreign contribution to the NGO sector in India stood at Rs. 2,540 million, and it reached Rs. 3,500 million in next two years (Sooryamoorthy and Gangrade, 2001: 9). It is estimated that every year, under FCRA, over Rs. 20 billion flows from foreign donor agencies to voluntary groups for rural development alone (*ibid.*).[39] Funding from northern NGO donors continued to grow at an average annual rate of 13.63% between 1991 and 2000 (Kudva, 2005: 247). The flowing of foreign funds to Indian NGOs between 1990 and 1993 was as following (see Table 3.2).

[38] Informal Discussion, June 2008.
[39] However, "UN bodies like UNDP, UNICEF, and so on, as well as the IMF, the World Bank and their subsidiaries can give funds directly to NGOs. No FCRA is needed for such funding" (Biswas, 2006: 4409).

Table 3.2: Foreign Funding to Indian NGOs 1990-1993

Sl.	Country	Rupees (Millions)
1	Germany	29,360.68
2	United States	9,230.63
3	United Kingdom	4,210.45
4	Italy	3,010.97
5	The Netherlands	2,570.49
6	Switzerland	2,180.56
7	Canada	1,420.75
8	Spain	810.68
9	Sweden	760.24
10	Australia	670.24
11	Belgium	640.17
12	France	540.22
13	Austria	430.51
14	Finland	380.43
15	Norway	260.77
16	Others	3,190.64
17	Total	59,740.91

Source: (Sooryamoorthy and Gangrade, 2001: 9-10)

Several questions have been asked about the motives of the World Bank, the IMF and other multilateral organizations in increasingly funding the third world development. Several justifications have also been provided. However, the prime interest of the international capital in aiding development in the third world is

> …to start the more than a billion people now living in the less developed areas up the road towards rising production and consumption while maintaining the growth of the industrialized areas. To achieve this, capital needs to be constantly expanding, finding new producers and producing new consumers – what Marx abstractly called "value in motion"….The development apparatus serves this function by seeking out, locating and harnessing marginal communities to realize the productive power of capital (Kamat, 2002: 161-62).

The World Bank President and U.S Treasury Secretary also pointed out about their interest in financing development programmes in India:

> Development institutions offer the United States a cost-effective vehicle for addressing global issues such as environmental degradation, poverty and political

> instability – as well as building open markets and democracy….Economic development abroad increase markets for US products and ideas (cited in Kamat, 2002: 162).

The formal recognition by the state and increasing funding by international donor agencies as well as by the state led to the mushrooming of NGOs in India. The middle class once again emerged to play important roles in managing NGOs, which aimed to perform not just the role of "public service contractors" but also of dominant mediating actors between the people and the state. As Harriss (2005) has shown in his research in Delhi, participation in associational activities is skewed quite heavily towards those with higher levels of education and income, and they provide little space for active participation to the poor. Biswas (2006: 4408) has noted that "[t]he increase in the foreign funds inflow into NGOs today is more than 20 times what it used to be in the mid-1980s and since then, the number of registered NGOs has increased by 250%". They have been active in various aspects of development such as education, health, community development and social service delivery, and so on (see Table 3.3).

Table 3.3: Areas of Activity and Number of Institutions

Areas of activity	In %
Religion based	26.5
Community/Social Services	21.5
Education	20.4
Sports and Culture	18.0
Health	6.6

Source: (Srivastav and Tandon, 2005: 1949).

A recent survey shows that there are more than 1.2 million NGOs in India today where almost 20 million people work either in a voluntary capacity or for a salary (Srivastava

and Tandon, 2005: 1948). The survey also points out that 53% of these organizations are rural and 47% are urban (*ibid*.: 1949). Considering this rapid growth and predominant role of NGOs, Parekh (2001: 703) has declared India as "the unofficial NGO capital of the world"; while many others have argued that this has resulted in the "NGO-ification of civil society" in India (Ray and Katzenstein, 2005; Kudva, 2005: 234; see Table 3.4).[40]

Similarly, the number of NGOs has also increased in Rajasthan over the years; and Udaipur district claims a major share in it. These NGOs mainly focus on *sangathan* (organization), *sangharsh* (agitation) and *samrachna* (constructive work) (Rajvansi, 2007: 326). A study conducted by PRADAN (1996) points out six factors responsible for the growth of NGOs in Rajasthan: (1) promotion of NGOs by bi-lateral and multilateral agencies, (2) NGOs set up by retired government officials as a worthwhile post-retirement option,[41] (3) support organizations to promote the establishment of NGOs, (4) entry of corporate sector in facilitating voluntary activities, (5) spin off from large organizations[42], and (6) the rise of issue-based activism by social action groups.

Prior to 1950, the number of established NGOs in Rajasthan was only 8 (Rajvansi, n.d: 19) but today, there are 458; of which 41 are functioning in Udaipur district, which is the third largest after Jaipur (107) and Bikaner (45) (Rajvansi and Jain,

[40] Kamat (2002: xii) has described this as the "NGOization of grassroots politics" which, according to her, is a product of four discursive moments: (1) separation of the economic from the political, (2) commodity fetishism, (3) reification of the state, and (4) the individualization of social relations of exploitation.

[41] Many in Udaipur point out that Seva Mandir was established by Dr. Mohan Singh Mehta as a kind of "*ashrama* for his old age" (see Franda, 1979: 180).

[42] Referring to the "spin-off" factor, Hemendra Chandalia, a Press Trust of India (PTI) journalist in Udaipur declared that "I would say that Seva Mandir has got the credit or you may call it blame for doing this. It has been a sort of 'hydra' – producing more and more from its own structure – and at least 20 to 25 NGOs have come out of Seva Mandir. People who worked with them have come out and set up their own NGOs. It has become in a way a career in itself and also a means of self-employment. I am not talking of its merit – whether it is good or bad but this is what has happened". For example, organizations like Ubeshwar Vikash Mandal (1983) by Kishore Saint, Astha Sansthan (1986) by Om Srivastav and several others have emerged from Seva Mandir (Interview, 7 January 2007).

1999). The voluntary organizations database of the Planning Commission suggests that there are 489 NGOs functioning in Rajasthan; of which 64 are in Udaipur.[43]

According to Rajvansi (2007: 336), 80% of NGOs in Rajasthan work in rural areas, where as 20% carry out their activities in rural and urban areas both. She also points out that 70% of NGOs in every district in Rajasthan work with the objective of welfare service delivery including that of education, and health of women and children. The Maharana Kumbha Sahkar Bhawan, which registers NGOs in Udaipur reports that 3163 organizations of different kind have been registered in Udaipur between 1988 and 13 February 2007 under the Rajasthan Societies Registration Act 1958.[44] As a result of increasing number of NGOs in Udaipur, one of its streets named Fatehpura has been described by many as the "NGOs street" and Udaipur not by its traditional name, the "city of lakes" but as the "city of NGOs".[45]

It was in the 1980s, the discourse of development was undergoing serious change not only in India but also globally. Alternative development models such as appropriate technology and small is beautiful (Schumacher), pedagogy of the oppressed (Freire), eco-friendly life styles and limits to growth (Club of Rome) were propagated by various global groups (Sheth, 2004: 46). Neo-liberal globalization in India, which came with the policies of open-market competition, downsizing the state apparatus, and cutting back on public expenditure, resulted in sharp division between the "classes" and the "masses".[46]

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[43] http://pcserver.nic.in/ngo/; accessed on 23 January 2008.

[44] This information was collected by the researcher from Maharana Kumbha Sahkar Bhawan, Udaipur, on 13 February 2007. The data before 1988 is missing as it was destroyed in fire by a short circuit.

[45] Interview with Meenakshi Paliwal of Mine Labors Protection Campaign on 17 January 2007. Similarly, Shantilal Bhandari, who runs an NGO named Sajeev Seva Samiti, says "Udaipur is full of NGOs" (*Topla Bharia*) (Interview, 7 January 2007).

[46] By classes Kothari (1986) refers to the upper and middle classes. He argues that the "classes" are to wallow in the imported mass culture of consumption and the masses are to be left to the playground of the market and that, too, largely in the unorganized sector.

The poorest of the poor neither became full-wage earners in the economy nor even full-fledged citizens in the polity (*ibid.*: 48). The struggles of the poor around issues of identity and exclusion became increasingly vital.

In the process of opposing neo-liberal economic policies and as a part of charting out alternative discourses of development, grassroots social movements expanded the arena of politics beyond the sphere of representational institutions of elections and political parties. While some have referred to these movements as constituting an influential "Fifth Estate", others have referred to them as mere "bubbles" on the political surface of India, which appear, burst and reappear from time to time without leaving much impact on the ongoing political life of the country (see Sheth, 1993: 275).

It should, however, be recognized that grassroots movements have played a significant role by articulating the basic issues of development in the framework of rights (see Table 3.4). In Rajasthan, the MKSS, which was established on the May Day in 1990 in Devdungri village in Rajasthan under the leadership of Magsaysay award winner and social activist Aruna Roy, has spearheaded several grassroots movements.[47] This has fought against bureaucratic corruption and demanded people's right to information (see Jenkins and Goetz, 1999; 2003). After ten years of struggle, the government of Rajasthan passed the Right to Information legislation on 1 May 2000; and at the all-India level it became effective on 13 October 2005.

[47] Aruna Roy served in Delhi's civil service for six years, an experience that taught her how India's bureaucracy works or doesn't work. She eventually quit in disgust and made a name for herself among India's rural poor through her work at MKSS. Roy has worked tirelessly to create awareness of a fundamental right that is meant to be a vehicle for transparency, openness, accountability, and civic involvement. In 2000, she was honoured with the prestigious Ramon Magsaysay Award, generally regarded as Asia's Nobel Prize, for empowering Indian villagers to claim what is rightfully theirs by upholding and exercising the people's right to information.

Table 3.4: The Evolution of Civil Society in India

Phase	Government	Civil Society Development	Nature of Civil Society
Colonial Period	British Raj	Established by the propertied, upper caste, English educated elites as a part of anti-colonial nationalist struggle. Christian missionary activities focusing on education, health and social welfare; Upper caste Hindu and Muslim religious and reformist organizations; growth of vernacular and English language newspapers; middle class civic and interest associations, caste associations (*sabhas*), and formation of the Indian National Congress (INC) by English educated Indians.	*Burgerliche Gesellschaft:* elitist and middle class oriented; limited public sphere; nationalist civil society.
	Mahatma Gandhi and Anti-colonial Struggle (1915-47)	Voluntary action for rural development, "constructive work" programmes, and mass movements. INC became an open and inclusive mass-based political party.	Emergence of mass-based and "village-level civil societies".
1947-1964	The Period of Nehru	Elite control of state and society; a strong welfare-oriented "high-modernist" state intervening in society; top-down community development and poverty reduction programmes; promotion of secular organizations; set up of Gandhian voluntary organizations for constructive village work; & state funding for NGOs.	Elitist and exclusionary; "silent partners" of the state to provide welfare and relief.
1967-1977	The Regime of Indira Gandhi and Emergency Rule	Period of populism and decline of institutions; increasing corruption, centralization and personalization of authority; deinstitutionalization of the "Congress system"; crisis of representation; Emergency rule and suspension of civil and political rights; enactment of the Foreign Contributions Regulation Act (FCRA) 1976 and ban of both the left and right wing political organizations; promotion of "apolitical" NGOs; rise of demand groups; anti-corruption and JP movement; rise of "non-party political formations" and grassroots movements.	Restricted political space for civil society. Rise of mass-based "civil society against the state" as a response to the Emergency rule.

1977-1979	The Janata Government	Promotion of Gandhian organizations; formation of voluntary associations in the countryside and their involvement in rural development and social welfare; increasing state support to NGOs; encouragement of corporate donations to NGOs; and expansion of Hindutva (RSS) organizations.	Civil society as active partner of the state: NGOs grow and take a stronger role.
1980-1984	The Return of Indira Gandhi	Restriction of the functioning of voluntary sector; amendment of the FCRA in 1984 and making it obligatory for NGOs receiving foreign funds to register with the Home Ministry; ban of politicized NGOs; appointment of Kudal Commission investigate the Gandhian NGOs; and restriction on the flow of corporate donations to NGOs.	"Apolitical" and limited role of civil society.
1984-1991	The Rajiv Gandhi Period	Promotion of voluntary organizations as effective service delivery mechanisms, active partners and watchdogs in development; shift towards participatory approach; increasing state support to NGOs in social sector; and establishment of the CAPART.	Civil society as effective and efficient "public service contractors".
1991-1997	The Congress Government and the Structural Adjustment Programme	Rolling back of the state from many areas of social welfare; increasing international development aid to reduce poverty; limiting the "oppositional civil society" as a part of the global agenda for good governance; Planning Commission and the strengthening of Government-NGO partnership; and mushrooming of NGOs. Implementation of neo-liberal policies of globalization and the rise of (right-based) alternative discourses of development.	Professionalization of NGOs and "NGO-ification" of civil society. Emergence of right-based grassroots movements.
1998-2004	The BJP led National Democratic Alliance Government	The twining of religion and politics; aggressive implementation of neo-liberal policies supporting the interests of the upper/middle caste/class; increasing funding from Hindu diaspora to RSS organizations which played an active role in promoting of socio-economic development as well as cultural nationalism (Hindutva).	"Saffronization" of civil society.

Similar other grassroots movements in Rajasthan that have been active since the 1990s are – *Jangle Jamin Jan Andolan* led by Astha; Movement for Water Conservation by Tarun Bharat Sangh; and Right to Food by Akal Sangharsh Samiti. It is, however, true that such movements have only had sporadic success in changing or influencing government policy, and certainly have not managed to reverse the tide of neo-liberalism. In this regard, it is significant that the mobilizational strategies that characterize these movements often combine the categories of class, caste, ethnicity and gender.

According to some estimates, there are 50,000 to 100,000 different movement groups active in the country (Sheth, 1995: 31). Such grassroots social movements that articulate the interests of the poor ultimately address the class character of the state due to their opposition to the neo-liberal economic policies that have been disproportionately beneficial to wealthy elites. Although their political action has been manifested mainly through mass *satyagraha* (passive resistance), the Naxalites have heavily used violent armed struggles to resist the exploitative policies of globalization and the eventual dispossession of poor (see Giri, 2009).[48] Data shows that the recent expansion of the Naxalites has been impressive: from 55 districts in 9 states in 2003 to 170 districts in 15 states in 2006 (*The Indian Express,* 31 August 2006).

Mobilization on the basis of caste has also appealed to the poor – who are usually low caste – because it involves a struggle to attain respect and dignity, and is based on an existing shared identity that lends itself to collective action (Mehta, 2003: 65). As a result of such mobilization, the previously discriminated castes and tribes acquired more

[48] Such preoccupation of violence and armed struggle by Naxalites, argue Menon and Nigam (2007: 123), is due to two basic reasons: (1) the cynicism and ruthlessness with which the non-violent struggles of people were treated by the power bloc, and (2) the complete abdication by the entire mainstream Left of the space of mass struggle and its confinement to the parliamentary arena (see also Sathyamurthy, 1997: 23).

political power which, according to Jaffrelot (2003), brought a "silent revolution" in north India (see also Hasan, 2000: 26; Chandra, 2003).[49] Several new regional political parties and organized groups also emerged to represent the regional, religious, caste, and ethnic political identities and interests. Those political formations that were able to arouse these identities were sometimes electorally successful. This can be seen in case of the Jharkhand Mukti Morchha in Jharkhand (tribal identity)[50], the Assam Gana Parishad in Assam (regional identity), the Telugu Desam Party in Andhra Pradesh, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam in Tamil Nadu (lower castes), the Shiv Sena in Maharashtra (ethnicity), the Samajwadi Party (backward castes), and the Bahujan Samaj Party (lower castes) in Uttar Pradesh. This "regionalization" of the party system, in a sense, resulted in the expansion of civil society in India (Jenkins, 2005; Sarangi, 2005).

3.3.7: The BJP Rule and "Saffronization" of the Civil Society (1998-2004)

It was at this moment, when the middle and upper class people were thrown out of power because of the decline of the Congress and were dejected by the rise of backward and lower caste groups, the BJP, following the legacy of Jayaprakash Narayan, called for a "value-based politics" and emerged to reshape national politics and state ideology (Hansen 1999: 158; Seshia 1998: 1040; see Table 3.5).

[49] By the 1960s, much of south India had gone through a relatively peaceful lower caste revolution: the DMK came to power as an anti-Brahmin party in the 1960s, and the Communist Party, first in power in Kerala in 1957, was primarily based in the Ezhava community, a low caste of traditional toddy-tappers engaged in liquor production. Some of the explicitly lower-caste parties are: JD, RJD, SP, BSP, JP, ADMK, DMK, MDMK, PMK, BJD, and RPI (Varshney, 2000: 5-6).

[50] Jharkhand Mukti Morchha (JMM) began as a federation of tribal and local groups in Bihar, Bengal and Orissa to demand for a separate state in the Indian Union. The state of Jharkhand was recognized in November 2000 and JMM became transformed into a political party in Jharkhand.

Table 3.5: The Sangh Family

Category	Role
Cultural Wing Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (National Volunteer Corps) – 1925	Source of Sangh ideology; inculcates Hindutva ideology by organizing *Shakhas* (cells).
Political/Parliamentary Wing Bharatiya Janata Party (Indian People's Party) – 1980	Political party participating in electoral politics.
Religious Wing Vishwa Hindu Parishad (World Hindu Council) – 1964	Performs aggressive and agitational role in promoting Hindutva.
Militant Wing Bajrang Dal – 1984	Paramilitary wing of VHP; established to provide muscle and manpower for VHP's agitation.
***Social Service Wing* (Sewa Vibhag)** Sewa International, Sewa Bharati – 1979 Vanvasi Kalyan Parishad – 1952, Ekal Vidyalaya Vikash Foundation, Sanskrit Bharati	Apparently formed to carry out social service to the community; in practice, they provide an entry point for ideological volunteers.

Source: (Behar and Prakash, 2004: 213).

By depicting the corruption issue as unethical, the BJP not only legitimized the "twinning of religion and politics in its own program" but also presented "religious values as a panacea for the political ills of the Indian state" (Seshia 1998: 1040-41). It emerged as "[t]he most successful religious-leaning party in India and perhaps the largest religiously based political movement in the world" (Juergensmeyer, 2008: 103). Its ideology appealed the middle and upper class/caste people and, as a result, in the General Election in February 1998 the BJP emerged as the largest party in the Lok Sabha in Delhi (Hansen, 1999: 3). It created the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and ruled India until its defeat in the General Election in 2004.

Though the political career of the BJP began with Gandhian socialism, it radically transformed its economic strategy and aggressively adopted the neo-liberal model of development. Under the BJP rule, the interests of propertied class were presided over

through unapologetic policies of liberalization and economic reform. Privatization was accelerated; tax burden on the rich was reduced; innumerable small quota restrictions on economic activity were lifted; the IT sector boomed, employing thousands of young professionals; and closer ties between India and its wealthy diaspora were pursued (Desai 2004: 61). During these years the 1.5 million-strong Indian-American community, consisting largely of upper caste/class Hindus, became heavily involved in nation-building and economic development by supporting the state and several civil society organizations (Teltumbde, 2006: 253-54).

The NDA government led by Prime Minister Vajpayee also emphasized on the role of civil society organizations in socio-economic development as well as means to promote its idea of cultural nationalism at the grassroots. He declared during a conference on the "Role of Voluntary Sector in National Development" in April 2002 that:

> I would like to liken nation-building to a chariot driven by five horses. These are: the Central government; the State governments; Panchayati Raj Institutions; the private sector; and last, but not the least, voluntary organizations and community based groups. The chariot will run fast and in the right direction only when all the five horses run in tandem (cited in Kudva, 2005: 233).

He also added that "greater involvement of voluntary organizations will help government in providing more efficient delivery of services at substantially lower costs" (Kudva, 2005: 233-34). As per the data, the Central government spent around Rs. 10 billion in 2001 to fund over fourteen thousand NGOs (*ibid.*: 246). These favourable policies of the BJP-led NDA government helped the organizations of Hindutva to carry out their activities without any constraint. The organizations of the RSS, which is said to be the largest volunteer organization in the country with a membership of 1.3 million, became actively involved in grassroots development during the BJP rule (Jayal, 2007: 144).

Although the RSS rejected foreign funding, it did not reject funding from the Hindu diaspora (*saffron dollar*) and those overseas organizations (for examples, India Development and Relief Fund (IDRF) in the U.S. and Sewa International in the U.K.) that work for the cause of Hindus. According to Kinnvall (2006: 151), with the demolition of Babri mosque in Ayodhya in 1991, many Hindu Non-Resident Indians gave financial support to Hindu nationalist organizations such as the RSS, the VHP and the BJP to plan for the construction of a Hindu temple. Overseas Indians in Great Britain and the United States have been especially active in this regard (*ibid.*).

The Foreign Exchange of Hate (2002), a report published by the Sabrang Communications (SC-Mumbai) and South Asia Citizen's Web (SACW–France), indicates that 82.4% of the funds disbursed by the IDRF go to the Sangh organizations and 8.1% go to other sectarian Hindu religious organizations. Only 2.2% of its funding goes to the secular organizations (SC and SACW 2002: 87).[51] From the "activity-funded" view point, the report documents that nearly 70% of the IDRF's money goes for Hinduization/Education/Tribal activities and less than 20% goes for "development" (3.9%) and "relief" (15.2%) activities. It is interesting to note that much of the funds disbursed under "relief" were used along sectarian lines and promoted communal divisions (*ibid.*: 87-88).[52]

In addition to this, of the seventy-five sister organizations that the IDRF has set up to receive funds, sixty are, including the RVKP, clearly identifiable as the Sangh-

[51] The amounts and percentage of funds disbursed by the IDRF on the basis of ideology are as follows – Sangh - $ 2,684,915 (82.4%); Religious - $ 264,660 (8.1%); Secular - $ 70,620 (2.2%); and Unknown - $ 239,785 (7.4 %) (SC and SACW, 2002).

[52] The amounts and percentage of funds distributed by the IDRF on the basis of activity are as follows – Educational/Tribal/Cultural - $ 2,250,685 (69.0%); Religious - $ 58,890 (1.8%); Developmental - $ 128,330 (3.9%); Welfare/Health - $ 247,935 (7.6%); Relief - $ 494,730 (15.2%); Unknown - $ 79,410 (2.4%) (SC and SACW, 2002).

affiliates in India (SC and SACW, 2002: 13, 47). Similarly, Sewa International has also been supporting the Sangh-affiliated organizations like Sewa Bharti, the VKA, the Kalyan Ashram Trust, and the Hindu Vivek Kendra. It has also been funding the education of 2,500 poor children in India (Quddus, 2005: 153). An Awaz – South Asia Watch report in 2004 showed that a third of the money collected by Hindu organizations in Britain, ostensibly for earthquake and cyclone relief, actually funded the Sangh Parivar's criminal, anti-minority activities in Gujarat and Orissa (Biswas, 2006: 4407).

The six years of BJP rule (1998-2004) marked the highest point of communalism in Indian history. Civil society became fragmented on religious lines and the minority religious groups were relegated to the status of "second class citizens" (Kaur, 2005: 20; Nandy, 2008). According to the report, *The Foreign Exchange of Hate*, violence against minorities "significantly escalated" during the BJP rule that radically communalized the public sphere. The report also shows that between January 1998 and February 1999 alone, there were 116 attacks against the Christian community in India, specifically targeting Christian missionaries, priests, nuns, schools and churches (p. 8).

One such example is the Hindutva activists in Orissa accused pastor Graham Stains of converting the tribals and burnt him alive along with his two sons, Philip and Timothy in Orissa on 23 January 1999. The Gujarat riot in 2002 also happened during the BJP rule, where more than 2000 Muslims were killed and 150,000 were left homeless (SC and SACW, 2002: 8). Thus, the six years of BJP rule successfully implemented the hate politics of Hindutva that eventually resulted in, what Desai (2004: 49) has called, "a systematic 'saffronization' of state and civil society" in India.

3.4: Conclusion: NGO-ification of Civil Society

It is evident from the above discussion that during the colonial period civil society was nationalistic and that it emerged as part of the anti-colonial struggle against the British. The membership in civil (society) associations, including the Congress party, was very elitist and middle class oriented. In the 1920s, although Mahatma Gandhi transformed the Congress party from an elite organization to a mass-based political party by mobilizing the peasants, Muslims, women, and others; its leadership largely remained confined to the English educated middle class and feudal elites.

After independence, the formation of the new Constitution, which guaranteed equality and rights to all citizens and encouraged free association, provided the potential space to expand civil society to the non-elite sphere. However, in the early phases of post-colonial period (period of Nehru: 1947-64), despite constitutional provisions, civil society continued to remain confined to the educated middle class. The reasons for this were the legacy of colonialism, development of a strong statist model of development, a failed revolutionary communist movement, and the virtues of modernity.

Although civil society remained elitist during the period of Nehru, it was free and autonomous. But the period of rule by Mrs Indira Gandhi (1967-84) constituted a harsh blow for the growth of civil society. Her imposition of a National Emergency suspended the scope for free associationalism. Even the Gandhian organizations, which were established during her father's time were accused of corruption and faced many constraints, such as the Kudal commission that was appointed to restrict the functioning of voluntary associations. It was during this period that various people's movements emerged at the grassroots to oppose her Emergency rule.

Such a development expanded the scope of civil society by mobilizing the so-called “un-modern”, illiterate, rural populations in large numbers for the first time. After the assassination of Mrs. Gandhi in 1984, her son Rajiv (1984-91) moved away from the previous policies of the Congress party and recognized the role of NGOs as partners of development in the seventh Five Year Plan (1985-90). This move occurred together with new pro-globalization policies a as well as the growth of international development aid provided to the NGO sector. These factors combined to cause the mushrooming of middle class NGOs, which has resulted in the NGO-ification of civil society in India.

4

SEVA MANDIR AND "CONSTRUCTIVE" SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

4.1: Introduction

This chapter examines the role of one of the oldest, well-institutionalized and well-known NGOs in Rajasthan – Seva Mandir – which has been working among the tribal populations in south Rajasthan for last four decades on socio-economic and institution building issues. It is argued that this organization fits broadly within the liberal-pluralist paradigm of civil society discussed in Chapter 2. Here the state is a "minimal" institution, and civil society shares a complementary and cooperative relationship with the state and acts within the well defined parameters of the rule of law. Ordinary people are encouraged to participate in community planning and development. Community participation, it is believed, will strengthen civil society, which in turn, will empower people as self-reliant groups and deepen the process of democratization.

Seva Mandir is a non-government voluntary organization working in 626 villages on rural and tribal development in the Udaipur and Rajsamand districts of Rajasthan (*Seva Mandir: An Overview*, 2007: 2). It was set up in 1966 by late Dr. Mohan Singh Mehta – a well known liberal thinker and visionary committed to social change and development through voluntary efforts. Influenced by the Gandhian idea of "constructive

work"[1], he dreamt of a "socially just society", which would bring an end to exploitation and establish a paradigm of development that is democratic and polyarchic. He nurtured a vision of ending poverty and educating the poor; and Seva Mandir grew out of social commitment and civic obligation to empower the marginalized and underprivileged sections of the society. As he writes, "where there is grief, where there is deprivation, where there is suffering from exploitation, where hope is vanquished, and where the darkness of ignorance prevails, it is there that Seva Mandir has its role to play" (*Comprehensive Plan Document*, 1990-93).

The 1960s was a time when the statist model of planned development was undergoing severe criticism and when the capitalist industrialization and modernization projects, such as dams and heavy industries popularly referred to by Nehru as the "temples of modern India", were destroying the natural resources and the cultures of the tribal people and were displacing them from their lands and livelihoods. It was during this time Seva Mandir emerged as a critic of the dominant value system, and the top-down coercive model of development as followed by the state. Although the state was considered as an important institution, Seva Mandir believed that "social structures" and values do not wholly determinate the process of development; voluntary effort of the citizens can change the direction of development. It thus advocated micro-scale

[1] The Gandhian idea of social development primarily aimed to create self-supporting, self-governing, and self-reliant village communities, where everyone's needs were satisfied and everyone lived in harmony. His "constructive work" programme, which evolved from 1915 to 1945 consisted of twenty items that visualized total transformation of the society, including communal unity, removal of untouchability, *khadi*, village industries, village sanitation, basic education, adult education, development of women, education in health and hygiene, provincial language, economic equality, *kishans* (peasants), labour, *adivasis* (tribals), leprosy, students, improvement of cattle, and nature care. Gandhi tested his constructive programme of rural development first in Champaran (Bihar) in 1917 and in Wardha (Maharashtra) in 1938. Gandhi proposed that his volunteers, who were known as constructive workers, take eleven vows before transforming into reconstruction workers: non-violence, truth, non-stealing, celibacy, non-possession, manual labour, control of the palate, fearlessness, equal respect for all religions, and the spirit of brotherhood (Sooryamoorthy and Gangrade, 2001: 46, 54: n. 18).

sustainable development and participation of people in the process, where the people will enjoy sovereign power in decision-making. Autonomy, self-reliance and decentralization constituted the foundational values of Seva Mandir. Voluntary work and people's participation became not only a means but also an end in Seva Mandir's efforts (*Comprehensive Plan Document*, 1990-93: 3). As documented in *Anubhav* (1994: 30), "[f]or him [Dr. Mehta] and, indeed, for Seva Mandir, the belief was that there was both a need and opportunity for constructive voluntary action for the redressing of want and of social inequities".

Four decades have gone by since Seva Mandir started its work. It has expanded the range and scope of its activities. Its services and geographic coverage have also expanded gradually; and as a result, Seva Mandir today is, as Weisgrau (1997: 88) has rightly pointed out, "the largest organization of its kind" and "continues to be the 'node' of NGO activities in Udaipur". The questions, however, are, how has Seva Mandir managed to achieve this status? How does it "do" development and what are the implications for the larger process of empowerment and democratization? To answer these questions, this chapter critically analyses the role played by Seva Mandir among the marginalized tribal groups in south Rajasthan.

This chapter argues that Seva Mandir has exerted significant influence on the tribal development process. Through its development programmes, funded by both international and domestic sources, it has established itself as what I call a "development hegemon" in south Rajasthan, especially in the tribal dominated district of Udaipur. It has maintained high-level cooperation with the Rajasthan government in offering policy advice and in implementing official programmes. If it is unable to negotiate with the

government, it prefers to stay silent rather than be drawn into relationships entailing conflict. The chapter concludes that by diverting its attention away from "claim making" on the state, by following a purely technocratic service delivery approach, and by implementing development projects, Seva Mandir has unconsciously developed a culture of "organized dependency"[2] at the grassroots level, which has often adversely affected its larger objective of empowerment and democratization (see Ferguson, 1994).

4.2: Seva Mandir and Grassroots Development

Despite of the existence of political democracy, the poor and marginalized tribal groups are suffering from various kinds of "unfreedom"[3] and deprivation. Considering the exploitative structure of feudalism, illiteracy, bonded labor, poverty, droughts and deprivation, Seva Mandir aimed to empower the common people by building their capabilities, so that they can have access to government programmes, demand their due rights, and overcome their unfreedoms (see Schneider, 2007: 32-6). As Franda (1979: 173) has rightly noted, Seva Mandir was established as an "attempt to adapt older notions of social welfare and reform to new exigencies by focusing on rural development programmes with which educated urban Indians can be involved". It believed that education is an important medium which will help people to accomplish their rights and entitlements; overcome poverty and unfreedom; create self-reliance and community

[2] Walder (1983: 52) uses the concept of "organized dependency" to refer to the economic, political and even personal dependency of the Chinese labour on the state enterprise. He argues that "[t]he greater the proportion of the subordinate's needs that is satisfied by the organization, the greater is the subordinates dependence on the organization. The fewer the alternative sources for satisfying these needs, the more dependent are the subordinates" (for more on organized dependency in Chinese context see Ching, 1999).

[3] Sen (1999: xii) argues that "development consists of the removal of various types of unfreedoms that leave people with little choice and little opportunity of exercising their reasoned agency". Some of the instrumental freedoms, according to him, are *"economic opportunities, political freedoms, social facilities, transparency guarantees,* and *protective security"*.

independence and bring social change in the tribal and rural society. Following this, it began to promote adult literacy among poor peasants and tribals in Udaipur district of Rajasthan.

However, with the occurrence of severe drought in 1973, it realized that education is not important in the lives of the people for meeting their ends. A single-minded emphasis on adult literacy is not enough for the well-being of the people; and thus, included a range of activities that would directly benefit the poor peasants and tribals in south Rajasthan. Keeping this in mind, Seva Mandir introduced some vocational and practical training, such as the farmer's functional literacy[4] that provided information about agricultural development, in its education programme.

Although the nature and scope of Seva Mandir has been expanded to include issues related to health, natural resource management, women and child development, and development of village institutions, education still remains one of its most important activities, implemented through non-formal education (NFE) centres, residential learning camps, village libraries (*Jan Shikshan Niliyam*–JSN), youth resource centre (YRC), and so on (see Table 4.1). One of the reasons for this is that education appears to be the single most important route for exiting poverty (Krishna cited in Joshi, 2008: 10). Due to the dispersed nature of housing in hilly areas, village schools are not easily accessible to children and also in a tribal economy, children's time is considered indispensable for household activities. Besides this, the teachers are often absent and the quality of education in government-run schools is poor.[5]

[4] This was a Government of India project in 1974 which aimed to combine non-formal literacy with instruction in improved farming techniques.

[5] Data shows that teacher absence in India ranges from 20% to over 50% in different states (*The Times of India*, 11 March 2006; see also Banerjee, 2007; Banerjee and Duflo, 2006).

To reduce teacher absence, the World Bank (2004) in its report on *Making Services Work for the Poor* suggested community control of the public schools. However, it was observed that teachers in community schools actually come less often than in either government or private schools (Banerjee, 2007: 155). Seva Mandir also faced similar problems in some of its NFE centres, where the absence rate was 44% in 2003 (Banerjee and Duflo, 2006: 119; Banerjee, 2007: 152-164).

Following the advice of Prof. Easther Duflo of Massachusetts Institutes of Technology (MIT), Seva Mandir introduced cameras in 60 NFE centres, where the teacher was asked to take a picture of him and the class at the beginning of each day and at the end, with a time-and-date stamp on each picture. Over 18 months, the camera schools recorded teacher absence of 22%, against 42% for normal schools (and 44% for all schools before experiment). Children in the camera schools also performed much better on their exams (*The Times of India,* 11 March 2006).

Seva Mandir is now running 172 community-run NFE centres in remote regions, where more than 4,500 students are enrolled (*Annual Report*, 2007: 34). It has been running 43 village libraries (JSNs), which started in 1991, as a Government of India Project to keep the neo-literates in touch with education (*ibid*.). Despite of all these efforts those children who are still unable to attain education, Seva Mandir tries to bring them to its two month long residential literacy camp organized three times a year. Not only the children, but also the youth and women's education occupy a prominent place in its objective since it believes education as the major transformer of human life.

Table 4.1: Seva Mandir's Educational Achievements – 2007

No of NFE centres	172
No. of children enrolled in NFE centres	4,581
No. of learning camps	3
No. of children reached through learning camps	225
No. of village libraries (JSN)	43
No. of youth resource centres (YRC)	6
No. of *anudeshaks* (NFE teachers) trained	190
No. of *preraks* (JSN in-charge) trained	38
No. *anudeshaks* exposure visits	1

Source: (*Annual Report*, 2007: 34)

Seva Mandir is generally acknowledged to be one of the most successful organizations in India in imparting adult literacy (Franda, 1979: 178). Its education programme brought important changes in the socio-political aspects of tribal life such as promoting child and women education, freedom from bondage and exploitative relationship, awareness about their legal and political rights, and exercise of voting rights in electoral politics. It also sensitizes people about various social problems like heavy drinking habits, unnecessary expenses in marriages and communal feasts, practice of crime (*Moutana Pratha*),[6] health and sanitation problems through several cultural programmes and conscientization and awareness camps. It could be said that Seva Mandir's role in spreading education has not only brought awareness and increased the level of literacy among the tribals but also has built capacity and confidence among people to participate actively in development, politics and everyday social life. As the people of Sadha village in Kotra block revealed on 4 June 2008:

> …previously people in our village didn't go to school but now all are educated and have gone at least till middle school. NFE centres [of Seva Mandir] in different

[6] *Moutana* is a system where the people get organized to take revenge or demand compensation from the responsible party for the death or injury of a person from their own *Jat* or tribal group. It is very contextual and sometimes also includes one village against another when the victim and the killer belong to two different villages. People use different kinds of drum beating that conveys different kinds of message to the people to get together. People could make out the reasons of getting together from the beatings of the drum.

> *falas*[7] spread education in our village. Men and women are able to receive information on health, education and several government development programmes. People of the village are no longer scared of the government officials [especially the police, the forest guards and the land revenue officers]. Everybody is confident and can face government officials without any fear. Even the women can now speak to government officials. Although we now have information, we don't have money and without money, we can't work [for the development of the village]. Seva Mandir should do some *vikash karya* (development work).

It is clear from the above quote that despite of having information, the villager's inability to have access to funding constitutes a major constraint to local development. However, it should be noted that the villagers have hardly made any demand for development funding from the PRIs which is responsible for local development (discussed later).

Amartya Sen (2006) has argued that poverty is the consequence of deprivation of basic human capabilities. According to Seva Mandir, poverty among the tribals is the result of a combination of several constraints: (1) structural constraint – inequitable land access, (2) social/institutional constraint – low level of social capital, (3) capability constraint – poor status in nutrition, health, education, etc., and (4) gender constraint – deprived status of women (see Mehta, n.d.). "The poor status of capabilities impinges directly on the well being and severely restrains the acquisition and spread of skills necessary to gain entry into the organized sector" (*ibid.*). Civil society organizations could address these deeply entrenched constraints either through civil society activism or by influencing the functioning of the state or by improving the efficiency through constructive development activities and voluntary social action.

Seva Mandir has preferred to refrain itself from political activism and followed the constructive and voluntary action approach to address the above mentioned

[7] *Falas* are the hamlets within a village. A revenue village consists of many *falas* which are dispersed over large geographical territory.

constraints. For land, it has worked on common property resources; for social capital, it has formed village institutions; for capability improvement, it has introduced several health, education and training programmes; and for gender equality, it has been working for the development of women and girl children. Following the popularity of Putnamin idea of "social capital" in democratization, Seva Mandir, in its second Comprehensive Plan 1994-1998, provided strong emphasis to build networks of civic engagement (social capital) through village institutions.

Autonomous village institutions were created to act as the common space for collective voluntary action and to improve the capabilities and life-chances of the people. According to Yakub Ji, the head of the *Gram Vikash Kosh* (village development fund – GVK) Unit of Seva Mandir in Udaipur, Seva Mandir created the common village fund primarily because of three basic reasons: (1) to enhance the sustainability of development projects in the village; (2) to increase people's stake in development process through participation; and (3) to make the village financially autonomous.[8]

Institutions like the village fund provided a basis for people to come together and deliberate on their common and collective interests (Mehta, 1999: 100). These village institutions, popularly known as the *Gram Samuhas/Gram Vikash Committee* (GVCs – village development committee), served as the kernel of Seva Mandir's activity, functioning and entry point to the villages. It is through these institutions that Seva Mandir organized the village people and encouraged their participation in community development projects, which, it believed, will increase their autonomy and freedom[9] in

[8] Interview, 20 January 2007

[9] However, as Harriss (2007: 2721) has shown, "community development programmes" of the service delivery NGOs, which aim to "uplift" poor people, act as disciplining mediums for them since these

decision-making and deepen the process of empowerment and democratization. As the *Comprehensive Plan Document* (1990-93: 37) declares:

> …village groups were formed to bring the poor together to play an active role in determining their development goals and evolve methods to secure control over the development process.

Seva Mandir's development work in a village begins with an informal local group and then proceeds with the opening of a common village development fund where people deposit 10% of their daily wage for the future development of the village.[10] A 9 or 11 member (including a certain number of females) village development committee is then democratically elected by the people for planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the development projects in the village. As per the data, Seva Mandir has created 386 village development committees and 541 village development funds, where a total of Rs. 25 million have been saved (*Annual Report*, 2007: 13; see Table 4.2).

Table 4.2: Village Institutions of Seva Mandir – 2007

No. of Village Development Funds	541
No. of Village Development Committees	386
Total balance of GVK (Rs. Millions)	25
Total membership of GVCs ('000 households)	47
No. of elections and/ or re-elections	162

Source: (*Annual Report*, 2007: 13)

The creation of the GVCs, claims the *Comprehensive Plan Document* (1990-93: 26-7), "introduced an element of cohesion, which was hitherto lacking among the poor in

programmes put them into the habits of hygiene and personal health, and responsible saving through the burgeoning medium of "self-help groups".

[10] Seva Mandir carries out both community benefit and individual benefit work in the villages. In the community projects, like *anicut* construction, where most of the village people work, it is all the labourers who will have to deposit 10% of their daily wage in the GVK; but in individual work, like *medbandi*, where few individuals get benefitted, it is the (individual) beneficiary, not the labourers, who deposit 10% of the sanctioned project money in the GVK (Interview with Yakub Ji, 20 January 2007).

respect to development issues". It urged people to take "collective responsibility" for the development of the village. As Yakub Ji has noted, there are more than 150 such committees which are now monitoring the work of paraworkers in their village and making their payment; and 18 committees who pay the paraworkers from the interests of the GVK.[11] People have also utilized the GVK money for village development. In Vasela village of Kotra block, the people have utilized Rs. 22,000 of the GVK money in fish rearing, which has helped gaining profits for the people.[12]

Similarly, the people of Sahariya samuha borrowed Rs. 35,000 from their GVK fund to buy a thresher for their village. They charged 5 rupees per use and only in one season they have earned around Rs. 20,000, which will repay half of their loan (*Annual Report*, 2007: 15). After repaying the loan, the rest of the money will be the profits of the villagers. It could be said that the GVK money is often utilized as an alternative source of finance for the village people in creating self-reliant and sustainable development projects. Such grassroots initiatives not only eradicate the sense of fear and financial constraints as expressed above by the people of Sadha village but also increase their autonomy and capacity to exercise leadership.

The village committees act as a common "social space" where people actively participate not just in community planning but also in giving concrete shape to their community development. Inclusion into the committee requires a token membership fee

[11] The paraworkers like NFE *Anudeshak*, JSN *Prerak*, *Dai Maa*, *Vanpal*, etc., who are in charge of various projects (health, education, children, women, etc) of village development, are paid by Seva Mandir. It is generally the case that the staffs of Seva Mandir go to the villages on the scheduled date to make the payments to the paraworkers. But now, many village committees have taken the responsibility to monitor and evaluate the works of paraworkers in the village and make payments according to their work. For this, Seva Mandir deposits the salary in the GVK account from which the committee members draw money to pay the paraworkers. Some villages pay their village paraworkers from the interests of their GVK money and don't take money from Seva Mandir.

[12] Discussion with Sripal Ji, Kotra Zone worker during the visit to Vasela village on 23 September 2006.

which gives legal stake in the committee and is open to all irrespective of class, caste, religion, group and political affiliation. Unlike the Habermasian idea of exclusivist bourgeoisie public sphere,[13] the GVC represents an inclusive free social space where an ordinary individual is able to express his opinion. It neither excludes ordinary people on the grounds of having no access to property[14] and education nor rejects their views referring as "mere opinions". It ensures equal participation of women through reservation of seats in the executive committee. Discussions between the villagers, members of the committee and field staff representative of Seva Mandir occur on a regular basis. The planning proposal is made through debate and discussion where women and children also play an important role.

Apart from the GVCs, other institutions like the JSNs and the NFE centers provide a common space for people to discuss everyday politics and village affairs. The JSN has become a meeting place for the children and youths as well as for adult villagers. The JSN subscribes to the vernacular newspapers that provide information about the socio-political and economic situation in the locality and the country. It has also entertainment instruments (carom boards, story books, and so on) that bring the children, the youths and the adults together. As Bharatji, in-charge of Seva Mandir's education unit in Jhadol block rightly mentioned on 14 September 2006:

> JSN is basically a *manch* [common space] to organize meetings in the village. It was started [by Seva Mandir] primarily as a discussion place or common ground for the villagers to get together.

[13] For a discussion on the Habermasian idea of bourgeoisie public sphere see Habermas (1989), Calhoun (1992), and Cohen and Arato (1992) and for its relevance in the Indian context see Rudolph and Rudolph (2003) and Sahoo (2006).

[14] People have to pay a minimum fee to become a member of the committee. The amount of the fee is, however, decided by the villagers keeping in mind that even the poorest of the poor should be able to pay the fee. The fee amount is not fixed, sometimes 2 or 3 rupees or could even be 21 rupees.

Although the JSN, the NFE and other institutions act as a common space for villagers, it is primarily through the GVCs Seva Mandir implements its developmental projects in the village. These development projects are utilized as incentives or mediums to organize people in the villages. The founder of Seva Mandir Dr. Mohan Singh Mehta believed that "democratic freedom is sustained and fruitfully developed not only by the constitutional provisions and development plans of the government, but also by the energetic involvement of people at the grassroots level" (*Comprehensive Plan Document,* 1990-93: 36). Following this, Seva Mandir uses development schemes as practical means to encourage people's participation and democratic freedom which, it believes, would provide concrete opportunity for the community to learn and practice self-governance. As Sripal Ji, one of Seva Mandir's staff in Kotra, declared on 22 September 2006:

> Seva Mandir works with the tribals not to provide services like *anicuts* [small check dams], health, education or any other developmental work. Its most crucial objective is to inform people about various government programmes and help people making demands on the government. These schemes are just the means through which Seva Mandir can reach the people. The government has many development schemes for the tribals but they are deprived of due to the lack of information. These are, thus, misappropriated by the people in power. By creating village institutions and spreading education among the tribals, Seva Mandir is reaching people to inform them about the various development activities.

The foundational objective of Seva Mandir was "to promote among the rural poor the confidence and skills necessary to demand accountability from their representatives and from the system at large" (*Comprehensive Plan Document,* 1990-93: 37). In 1985, Seva Mandir was selected to implement the wasteland development project of Government of India, which, in couples of years, became Seva Mandir's largest development programme (Khetan, 2003: xii). Considering this, some of the staffs believed that Seva Mandir is

shifting its priorities and deviating from its foundational objectives.[15] They resisted the move and argued that:

> …development work was the responsibility of the state and that it was not for civil society groups to bear this burden. They felt that undertaking large-scale development work would dilute Seva Mandir's commitment to strengthening the ability of village people to hold the state accountable for its perceived responsibilities (Khetan, 2003: xii).

This ideological conflict resulted in the division of Seva Mandir into two camps in the mid-1980s, one following the "constructive development" approach while the other to "claim-making".[16] The claim-making group dominated by the "(self-identified) Marxists and other radical political organizers" finally had to leave Seva Mandir to form their own organizations like the Astha Sansthan, the Ubeshwar Vikash Mandal and several others and to "pursue more confrontational organizing strategies" (Weisgrau, 1997: 86-87). Seva Mandir has argued in the line that "simply relying on mobilization and protest for long-term structural changes in the community (and larger society) are not fair to those who face immediate economic exigencies" (Kamat, 2002: 18; see also Fernandes, 1985). Therefore, Seva Mandir has, since then, been continuing with its constructive developmental approach as an important medium for the empowerment of marginalized and deepening of grassroots democratization. As Ajay Mehta, the President of Seva Mandir and director of National Foundation for India, noted on 27 February 2007:

[15] Interviews with Ramesh Nandwana and Kishore Saint, activists in Udaipur, on 21 November 2006. Some of the objectives are: (1) awareness and skills to assert rights and developmental priorities, (2) promoting cooperation, (3) participation and taking up of responsibility, (4) demanding accountability, and (5) feminist approach to development.

[16] This has also to do with the changing leadership in Seva Mandir during the time. Jagat Mehta retired as foreign secretary in the mid eighties and joined as the Chief Executive of Seva Mandir. Many people did not like it and were unhappy with the way Mehta's had taken over the leadership, which forced the dissidents to leave the organization and to start their own (see Kuhn, 1998: 157).

> I would say that its [Seva Mandir's] role in development is very little. Its main role is democratization. If you empower people then only democracy will work. They can create "public agendas". They are creating on health, education and land. So it is all democracy. It is not development. It is creating an agenda through people [which] can [be fought] through electoral process, [or] through other public spaces. I would say all of Seva Mandir's work is about deepening democracy. Development is only a means. Many people think it is only doing development. For me, it is doing democracy and empowerment. Development is only a means. But the real outcomes are to make people create public agendas…. That's democratization.

Such "public agendas" for empowerment and democratization, as claimed by Mr. Mehta, are created by ordinary people at the village level institutions, where they publicly discuss the village problems and plan the development of the village. Following their proposals and considering drought as a common feature in Rajasthan, Seva Mandir has undertaken several natural resource development (NRD) interventions such as dry land management, forest management, watershed development, water management and agricultural extension to improve the livelihood security of the poor (*Annual Report*, 2007: 18; see Table 4.3). Data shows that natural resource development programmes received highest amount of funding from Seva Mandir's budget.[17]

Although the objective was to engage people in broader development process, very often it has become difficult for Seva Mandir to keep people involved without such incentives. In other words, participation of people largely depends (contingent) upon the availability of income generating activities. However, it is through these development programmes and the village level institutions, Seva Mandir has been transforming the identity of the participants from disaggregated individuals to organized collectivity or what Putnam (1993) calls "social capital". This increasing pool of social capital or

[17] For example, Seva Mandir spent more than Rs. 93 million in its natural development programmes between 2004-05 and 2006-07. During the same period, it spent Rs. 50,761,927 in field support; Rs. 46,823,898 in women's empowerment; Rs. 42,397,713 in education; Rs. 29,516,927 in health education, among others (see *Annual Report*, 2007: 83).

network of social relationship among the participants, as Seva Mandir believed, will facilitate coordination for collective benefits and create a "value base for the politics of cooperation" and build a countervailing politics at the grassroots level (Mehta, 1996: 2).

Table 4.3: NRD Work of Seva Mandir – 2007

Area covered under afforestation and protection (in hectares)	751
Area covered under Joint Forest Management (in hectares)	305
Area covered under watershed development (in hectares)	1,105
No. of water-harvesting structures built	5
No. of lift irrigations systems built	3
No. of nurseries maintained	69
No. of saplings planted	443,250
No. of horticulture plantations (household reached)	368
No. of vegetable nurseries (household reached)	94
No. of vermin-culture beds (household reached)	298
No. of cattle camps	24
No. of animal treated	11,020
No. of households reached through cattle camps	952
Total No. of households reached by agricultural extension	1,782
No of trainings	94
No. of participants	2,410

Source: (*Annual Report*, 2007: 18)

Development activities carried out by Seva Mandir was holistic and inclusive in nature. Besides education and physical development activities, Seva Mandir, considering the high rate of maternal and infant mortality rate in tribal regions, initiated several health programmes like immunization, reproductive health awareness camps, health education, and so on where the women played a major role. In a patriarchal society like Rajasthan where feudalism, the practice of *purdah* (veil) and *sati* (self-immolation of widows) were still prevalent, Seva Mandir encouraged participation of women in public as well as private sphere of existence. It aimed "to bring women into the mainstream of development activities and ensure that their perceptions and problems are given the priority consideration they deserve" (*Comprehensive Plan Document*, 1990-93: 37).

Considering this, it began the women's development programme in 1978, which took full shape in the 1980s (see Table 4.4). It included women exclusively in their health programme to reduce the risk at child-birth, organized literacy camps for women and formed various women's groups in the villages. Seva Mandir also started women's self-help groups (SHGs) from which the women can take loans with low interest rate to start small businesses. The women actively participated in various income generation activities and all other development programmes including raising nurseries, protecting forests, and running seed collection centers. This has helped, as Seva Mandir claims, not only in obtaining better health care, nutrition and educational facilities but also in developing their confidence and self-esteem (*Anubhav*, 1994: 23).

Seva Mandir's preschool nursery centers (*Balwadis*) are also run by the illiterate local women who receive continuous training (see Table 4.4). Seva Mandir included the women from untouchable and tribal communities and helped preventing them from being socially exploited and discriminated. They were encouraged to assert their position in the community and get involved in community development and decision-making primarily through the formation of women's groups. Women awareness camps (*Mahila Chetna Shivir*), adult literacy camps, exposure tours, training sessions were organized and women were given opportunity to share their experience with other women. They also celebrated the International Women's Day, which offered a common social space for discussing their problems and entertaining themselves with different cultural activities like songs and dances. Though its various welfare and developmental programmes, Seva Mandir claims to be creating a "quiet revolution" in the region where the women are acquiring "a progressive growth of confidence, an increasing willingness to struggle

against oppression and determination to seek a more equitable share in the benefits of the process of development" (*Anubhav*, 1994: 25).

Table 4.4: Seva Mandir's Women and Child Development Work – 2007

No. of Mahila Samuhas (women's groups)	378
No. of Panchayat level Mahila Samuha federations	29
No. of women's resource centres	7
No. of SHGs	542
Total membership of SHGs	9,930
Balance of SHGs (Rs. Million)	7.8
No. of households reached through income generation activities	425
No. gender sensitization workshops	9
No. of workshops with caste panchayats	8
No. of staff trained	121
No. of balwadi centres	161
No. of boys enrolled in balwadi centres	1836
No. of girls enrolled in balwadi centres	1967
Total number of children in balwadi centres	3803
Total number of Trained Birth Attendants (TBAs)	349
No. of youth awareness camps	9
No. of bi-monthly village meetings on health awareness	598
No. of villages covered by the health programme	156

Source: (*Annual Report*, 2007: 42, 51)

It is evident from the above discussion that Seva Mandir has followed a holistic approach to grassroots development where it primarily engages with the people and encourages their participation through what it calls "constructive development" or the implementation of development programmes, such as education, health, women and child development, natural resource development, and so on. By encouraging community participation through its well-trained and motivated cadre of paraworkers, it has tried to build a decentralized structure of leadership at the grassroots. Seva Mandir has also facilitated the creation of autonomous village institutions, which, it believes, will take up the collective responsibility for community planning and create self-reliant and sustainable structure at the grassroots level.

Seva Mandir is one of the oldest development NGOs in Rajasthan. Its large geographical coverage coupled with diversity of development activities has established itself as the "node" of NGO activity in south Rajasthan. However, it has faced criticisms about the nature of its work, the people's participation and the implications and sustainability of such large-scale development activities. For example, as Bhargava (2007: 277) has noted, although Seva Mandir has worked to "build capacities of communities to deal with internal threats", it has largely ignored "the external threats that [also] limit the freedoms and equity in citizenship".[18]

Before addressing these questions, it is important to examine how Seva Mandir has managed to acquire such "hegemonic" role. It is argued in the next section that Seva Mandir, by following a constructive instead of claim-making approach, has maintained a highly cooperative relationship with the state. It has cooperated with the state in planning and implementing the official development programmes; and has refrained from entering into any kind of conflictual relationship with the state. Such a non-confrontational approach has also established itself as a comfort zone for the state institutions at the grassroots level. This approach has also helped in gaining the support of large-scale international aid for programme implementation. All these factors combined have helped Seva Mandir emerge as the "development hegemon" in south Rajasthan.

4.3: Relationship with the State and Political Society

Seva Mandir's relationship with the state and political society could only be understood in the larger political context in the early 1970s which witnessed political populism, lack

[18] For Bhargava (2007: 277), some of such external threats to tribal life are land acquisition and displacement, rigid forest policy, issues of migration, and so on.

of freedom and increasing deinstitutionalization.[19] Influenced by Gandhian socialism, leaders like Jayaprakash Narayan opposed the authoritarian rule of Mrs. Gandhi and called for people-based-pressure (*satyagraha*) and "total revolution" in every sphere of social life. The post-emergency Janata government, which drew its ideological legitimacy from the idea of Gandhian socialism and "constructive work", recognized the voluntary sector as an indispensable element in development along with the state and political parties and increased resource allocation for them in the sixth Five Year plan. This was further increased by Rajiv Gandhi in the seventh Five Year plan.

Given such political context, Seva Mandir emerged to play an important role in "complementing state socialism" through its development activities in Rajasthan; and has hence enjoyed a comparatively good relationship with the state (see Franda, 1979: 181). It did not adopt the mobilizational or activism method of challenging the state; rather it preferred a "reformist approach" and relied upon "constructive" voluntary action and implementation of government programmes at the grassroots level. To quote:

> …essentially, Seva Mandir has preferred the reformist to the iconoclastic approach, taking care that it is neither broken by the system, nor unrealistically optimistic that the system will itself be quickly broken (*Anubhav*, 1994: 30).

Seva Mandir casts itself as a "politically neutral" voluntary organization and maintains a safe distance from issues of power and politics at the local level. It neither opposes the state structure nor wishes to reform or to replace the state. It maintains amicable relations with the state-level and local government authorities. It "has [also] distanced itself from undertaking or facilitating community actions that are logical conclusions of its own

[19] This was the period when Mrs. Indira Gandhi imposed Emergency rule in India and undermined the functioning of democratic institutions.

philosophy but may be 'political' or appear to constitute direct challenges to the state" (Ndegwa, 1996: 60).

Such political neutrality and amicable relations of Seva Mandir with the state in someway is suggestive of what Piven and Cloward (1977) consider as the conservatism that emerges in movement organizations as they become more institutionalized and bureaucratized. It is observed that Seva Mandir is not just highly institutionalized with its several departments and head-office in Udaipur and five block-level offices but also highly bureaucratized and centralized in its functioning such as service provision, financial approval, and decision-making. Such hierarchical relations and tendencies within Seva Mandir has drifted itself away from its participatory objectives and established itself in some way as an oligarchic developmental institution (Michels, 1959; Fisher, 1997:456; discussed below in detail).

Seva Mandir has focused on securing resources in order to expand service delivery instead of claim-making and activism. It envisages state as a "minimal" institution; seeks accommodation instead of confrontation with state institutions; and sees the voluntary sector not as an alternative to the state, rather as a complementary agency.[20] As *Anubhav* (1994: 30) rightly documents:

> Seva Mandir recognizes that it is easy to criticize the government, but prefers patience to politics. Furthermore it believes that the government has an essential role to play in development. It sees the voluntary sector not a substitute for governmental action but a necessary complement; each fulfilling a function the other cannot.

[20] According to Seva Mandir, "rather than the poor having to depend only on the state to promote their development and provide services, there should be alternative institutional support for the poor to service their development needs. Village Committees were set up to manage and monitor these programmes and Seva Mandir systems geared up to respond to village plans for development" (http://www.sevamandir.org/history.htm; accessed on 6 June 2007).

Similarly, Ajay Mehta, the President of Seva Mandir, also writes that:

> …the state alone can't be relied upon to solve the problems of society. The building of civil society capacities is the key to ensuring that the state will be more mindful of democratic and egalitarian agendas and will henceforth be more meaningfully engaged in such activities (Mehta, 2004: xii).

Seva Mandir works in close relationship with the government for the welfare of the poor and marginalized groups. It has "eschewed confrontation with the administration and has instead pursued activities that are non-confrontational" (Ndegwa, 1996: 63). It has recently worked with CAPART, the Central Social Welfare Board, Child Line, National Environmental Awareness Campaign, National Food for Work Programme and Udaipur Child Labour Project of the Government of India; and also with State Forest Department, the State Youth Ministry, State Women's Commission, the Rajasthan Health Department, District Poverty Initiative Programme, DRDA SGSY Programme, Charca Project, Lok Jumbis and Sarva Shiksha Aviyan of the Government of Rajasthan. It has also worked closely with the local administration and the Police and Courts. Besides this, it has served as "the 'nodal' NGO for the administration and supervision of a variety of governmental grants to smaller and newer organizations in Udaipur" (Weisgrau, 1997: 88).

However, Seva Mandir claims that while dealing with the government, it takes two things into account: (1) it would not compromise its autonomy and independence by accepting government funding, and (2) it would implement government programmes if these are wanted by the people (*Anubhav* 1994: 30). Seva Mandir, since its inception, has believed in the constructive voluntary action approach. Due to lack of own funding, Seva Mandir, like most other NGOs, have depended upon the government and donors. As Kamat (2002: 165) has argued, the "relative autonomy" of the NGOs – "that is, their

capacity to sustain themselves and determine their own projects and strategy – is greatly circumscribed by their increased dependence on the interests of international capital and the state". As a result, Seva Mandir has remained politically neutral and worked across political party lines. As a professor of Political Science in Udaipur University, pointed out, the ideological affiliations of the voluntary organizations, especially of Seva Mandir, have changed with the changing over-all political structure and culture of the state.[21]

Voluntary organizations and literacy programme got a new boost with the victory of Janata government in 1977. In the 1970s, Seva Mandir's work in the field of adult literacy positively influenced the government in adopting a National strategy to involve NGOs in adult literacy promotion (*Comprehensive Plan Document,* 1994-99: 18). The Government of India, in 1974, supported Seva Mandir in the nation-wide Farmer's Functional Literacy Project, which combined non-formal literacy with instruction in improved farming techniques (*Anubhav*, 1994: 7). In October 1978, the National Adult Education Programme was established by the Janata party government to eradicate illiteracy and Seva Mandir played an active role in the programme by running close to 600 education centres (Mehta, 2004: ix).

With the change of the government, the funding for the programme was stopped immediately which forced them to close down the centers. In 1986, the Government of Rajasthan once again asked it to implement the National Adult Education Programme in Jhadol and Kotra. Seva Mandir has also implemented the Lok Jumbis education project of the Government of Rajasthan funded by SIDA. Alongside adult education, since 1975, it has also taken up non-formal education for the young people between 6-14 years age; and since 1988, it has been running more than 100 NFE centers with the support of the

[21] Interview, 20 November 2006.

Indian Ministry of Education (*Anubhav*, 1994: 7-10). Seva Mandir's JSN project is also funded by the Government of India.

It collaborated with the government in designing and implementing not just the educational programmes but also the wasteland, watershed, agriculture, health, women's development and several other programmes. Though it implemented several government programmes in the mid-1970s, the scale and intensity grew in the mid-1980s when the government increased funding for the NGOs under the seventh Five Year plan. The National Wasteland Development Board provided a grant to Seva Mandir that was the single largest to any NGO in the country (*Comprehensive Plan Document*, 1990-93: 14). It was invited to implement the "Lab-to-Land" project of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) to transfer modern agricultural technologies among 150 farmers from the marginalized and disadvantaged communities (*ibid.*: 24).[22]

CAPART also invited Seva Mandir to be the "nodal training agency" for the "social animator" scheme of the state of Rajasthan to organize and train the poor to have access to their rights and benefits from the government schemes (*Anubhav*, 1994: 27). With the help of CAPART in 1987, it also encouraged people to group their private lands and develop them as integral whole or as locally known as *chaks* (*ibid.*: 15). It was the first NGO to train people to take part in the government's Joint Forest Management (JFM) projects (*Comprehensive Plan Document*, 1994-99: 19).

Seva Mandir was also appointed to the subcommittee on the eighth Five Year plan to formulate policies related to tribal development. It served the Advisory Council of

[22] In 1973, ICAR, following up the recommendations of the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Agriculture and the Planning Commission, also appointed Dr. Mohan Singh Mehta to formulate an institutional design of Krishi Vigyan Kendras to provide vocational training in agriculture (http://icarzcu3.gov.in/kvk/kvk.htm; accessed 30 July 2008).

the National Wasteland Development Board to monitor progress and suggest policy directions (*Anubhav,* 1994: 27). Seva Mandir's health programme was also supported by the Indian Ministry of Health for over a period of five years (*ibid.*: 21). More recently, the government has asked Seva Mandir to implement the *Janani Suraksha Yojana,* a UNICEF funded project in Jhadol block to improve the status of safe motherhood and reduce the child and maternal mortality rate.[23]

Seva Mandir's work in the areas of health and women's development; its participatory approach towards development and its primacy of people's needs continue to attract government support and collaboration. It has formed self-help groups with both the APL (above poverty line) and BPL (below poverty line) families and connected them with government income generation activities. It has also availed them loans which has helped the poor building their capacities and creating sustainable livelihood structures. Seva Mandir has hardly resisted the state. It rather supports the state and, in turn, is supported by the state. As the *Comprehensive Plan* (1990-93: 14) documents:

> …at the local level, we maintain good cooperation with the state agencies for development and receive substantial support from them in emergency situations such as draught relief.

It goes on to say about its relation with the state that

> In general, Seva Mandir enjoys the support and cooperation of the government. Still, however, we are not dependent on them. This gives us the strength to deal with the government on a footing of equality and autonomy. We have a strong commitment to work with government, but only to the extent that it serves our primary responsibility to help the rural poor (*Comprehensive Plan,* 1990-93: 14-15).

[23] The doctor during the inauguration of the *Janani Suraksha Yojana* pointed out that the MMR in India is 4 to 5 per 1000 while Rajasthan it is 7 to 8. Similarly, the IMR rate in India is 72 per 1000 but in Rajasthan it is more than 80.

The local level state officials and bureaucrats share mixed responses about the contributions of NGOs in rural and tribal development in south Rajasthan. They, however, seemed positive about the functioning of Seva Mandir in the region due to its non-involvement in protest movements. The Block Development Officer (BDO) in Jhadol remarked that:

> …[t]here are some NGOs who are "good" and some are not; some are active in different areas of development and some are idle. Seva Mandir is a "good" NGO having reputations even in the international level. We are planning to involve Seva Mandir and some other NGOs in the facilitation of self-help groups.[24]

A different perspective came from a Seva Mandir paraworker who explained that the staffs at the Madri primary health center do not have a good impression on Seva Mandir because they think themselves as government employees whereas Seva Mandir is just an organization (*sansthan*) that receives funding from foreign agencies. This impression could be, according to him, because of Seva Mandir's one time opposition to medical doctors asking money to help deliver babies at Jhadol community health center. The doctors do not check the patients properly if they are associated with Seva Mandir and refer them to Udaipur hospital which becomes very expensive for the poor villagers.[25]

It is evident that Seva Mandir has maintained a highly cooperative relationship with the agencies and institutions of state. Its founder Dr. Mohan Singh Mehta served the last ruling Maharana of Udaipur as Revenue and Finance Minister (Franda, 1979: 173). On two separate occasions prior to 1947, Dr. Mehta was the *Diwan* (Chief Minister) of Banswara, another princely kingdom in Rajasthan (*ibid.*). After independence, he became a member of the Constituent assembly in 1947; and served as India's High Commissioner

[24] Interview, 7 February 2007.
[25] Discussion with a Seva Mandir parivar sathi in Madri, Jhadol on 25 November 2006.

to Pakistan in 1951 and later as ambassador to the Netherlands, Switzerland, Austria and the Vatican in the 1950s (Franda, 1979: 180; Weisgrau, 1997: 86).[26]

According to Franda (1979: 173), Dr. Mehta "exemplifies the best of aristocratic and princely traditions that have successfully adjusted to India's increasing democratization in this [twentieth] century". His son Jagat Mehta was also a renowned foreign secretary who served as Seva Mandir's CEO and President and is now in the Board of Trusties. Dr. Mehta's grandson, Ajay Mehta worked as a bureaucrat between 1979 and 1984 and had been a consultant to the UNDP to evaluate poverty alleviation programs in the Middle East and Africa. Ajay Mehta's wife is also a high ranking bureaucrat with the Indian Administrative Service and it's because of her position, Seva Mandir enjoys "good relations with the high ranking bureaucrats" (Kuhn, 1998: 158).

Besides this, Seva Mandir is one of the oldest grassroots development organizations in Rajasthan. Due to Mehta family's reputation[27] and close relationship with the institutions of state, Seva Mandir has never opposed the state; similarly the state has always seen Seva Mandir in a positive way and actively involved it in the government projects in south Rajasthan.

By providing policy advices and by designing and implementing programmes, Seva Mandir has influenced government's policies on development. However, where it is unable to negotiate with the government, it prefers to stay silent than be drawn into a conflictual relationship. Seva Mandir's involvement in policy cooperation with the state has in some sense blunted its radical political activism.

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[26] He retired from the Foreign Service in 1958 at the age of 63, and was appointed as a member of Indian delegation to the United Nations General Assembly in 1959. From 1960 to 1966, he was the Vice-Chancellor of Rajasthan University (see Franda, 1979: 180; Weisgrau, 1997: 86).

[27] Mohan Singh Mehta has received *Padma Vibhusan*, the second highest civil decoration of India; and his son Jagat Mehta has received *Padma Bhusan*, which are the third highest civilian decoration of India.

The other reason to stay away from direct confrontation with the authorities is its long established image as an "apolitical" organization. This is clearly noticeable in Seva Mandir's stand on tribal people's demand to obtain ownership rights on forest land. Seva Mandir has long been working on natural resource development in general and on the project, *Decolonizing the Commons* in particular, where it organizes people to release the encroached village common properties, especially land, for the collective use of villagers. It does not support the privatization of common property or encroachment by any particular individual or group because it will lead to further destruction of forest resources.

Contrary to Seva Mandir's position, the Forest Land People's Movement (*Jangal Jamin Jan Adhikar*), where Astha Sansthan plays a dominant role, demanded the regularization of those lands where the tribal people have been living before 1980 (see Chapter 5). Seva Mandir has argued that forest land, in reality, is occupied not by the marginal tribals but by powerful individuals and dominant interests groups. Moreover, in recent years, more and more people are capturing large pieces of forest land believing that it will be legalized.[28] Despite all efforts, Seva Mandir has failed to persuade the government on this issue. Replying to a question on how the government is reacting to Seva Mandir's stand on forest land, Ajay Mehta declared that:

> …by and large [the government is] ignoring; [though] they have respect for Seva Mandir….You can say that we have not put more pressure on the state because it is state's policy, not Seva Mandir's policy. To my mind, the great indictment of the Indian bureaucracy and Indian state is that they make a policy and they are not serious about it.[29]

[28] Interview with S. N Bhise, Head of NRD Unit, Seva Mandir, on 5 February 2007.
[29] Interview, 27 February 2007.

The Government of India has finally passed the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Amendment Bill**,** 2007, which has declared to regularize tribal occupation of forest land till 2005 and recognize their right to it. Given this, many in Seva Mandir believe that such a move on the part of the government was purely influenced by vote-bank and patronage politics. As S.N. Bhise, the head of NRD Unit at Seva Mandir, remarked on 5 February 2007:

> …in the beginning they [the pro-privatization group] said that the injustice till 1980 should end and now they are not saying anything when the government is legalizing till 2005. They are happy. They should have said that no, we didn't ask for it. We asked till 1980 only. But none raised the voice…. It is political; to have the votes.

It is thus evident that although Seva Mandir does share a very cooperative relationship with the government, it often loses its ground to the large-scale movement groups, who, in the past, broke away from Seva Mandir (i.e. Astha) and followed the "claim-making" approach to tribal and rural development. However, besides the legacy of Mehta family, Seva Mandir's commitment to tribal development has established it as a dominant player in the "development industry" whose role cannot be ignored (see Ferguson, 1994). For example, in 2004, in a significant move on the part of Rajasthan government to include NGOs in the implementation of projects in water sector, the Chief Minister of Rajasthan, appreciated the works of Seva Mandir and other organizations in water conservation and believed that "their association with the Government Schemes would herald a new chapter in the augmentation of water resources" (*The Hindu*, 25 October 2004). Seva Mandir has been taken as a model not only in watershed development but also in the areas education (camera schools), health, and women and child development.

The question is how has Seva Mandir managed to perform such long-lasting and large-scale development initiatives in the tribal regions of Rajasthan? As mentioned above, Seva Mandir has a very good relationship with the various departments of the governments of Rajasthan and also of India and implements several of their programmes. However, a large part of its funding comes from the international development aid agencies and contributions from private corporations and individuals. As Anita Bhatia, the head of People's Management School (PMS) unit of Seva Mandir, mentioned:

> …government's [funding] is pretty low. Most of ours is international. Then the next would be national level NGOs or the private philanthropic like the Ratan Tata Trust. The last one would be the government partnership in some programmes.[30]

Significantly, Seva Mandir has long been associated with international aid agencies like the Interchurch Organization for Development Cooperation (ICCO-the Netherlands), Evangelischer Entwiklungsdienst e.v (EED-Germany), European Commission (EC), Plan International (New Delhi), Canada India Village Aid (CIVA-Canada), MacArthur Foundation (USA), Ford Foundation (New Delhi), The Paul Hamlyn Foundation (UK), Agha Khan Foundation (Afghanistan), Foundation Ensemble (Paris), Aid to Artisans (USA), Foundation for Sustainable Development (USA), Give World (USA), Goodwill Association of America, Monsoon Accessorize Trust (UK), Rafe Bullick Memorial Foundation (UK), Serene Light Inc (USA), Target International (USA), Tobin Foundation (USA), Undaunted Carnival Foundation (USA), Shell Foundation (UK) and several others. Besides this, the Friends of Seva Mandir (USA, UK) group, which was

[30] Interview, 23 January 2007

established in 2002, also raises funds "to support Seva Mandir in sustaining its work to enable the poor by improving their livelihood, health and educational status".[31]

Not only the development characteristics (high concentration of tribals, low level of illiteracy, large-scale poverty and gender inequality, prevalence of social conservatism, and feudal practices) but also the rich cultural history and natural beauty (like lakes, palaces, Jain temples, luxury hotels and roof-top restaurants) of Udaipur city has attracted the international and national development assistance and established it as the epicenter of NGO activities in Rajasthan (see Kuhn, 1998: 156, 258). Hemendra Chandalia, a PTI journalist in Udaipur, also noted on 7 January 2007 that:

> …it is very easy to impress the funding agencies with the poverty and the cultural richness of the tribal community. Without the real benefits being passed on to that community, it's very easy for these people to do sort of "window dressing" – they show with all their audio visual tactics, project reports, power point presentations and so on. So they are able to impress and get some funds from somewhere. This is the thriving business in a way.

Besides this, due to the excellent communication skills (knowledge of English) and a wide network of bureaucratic and international contacts[32], Seva Mandir, since the 1980s, has attracted increasing international support that has established it as one of the biggest NGOs in Rajasthan and even in entire India (Kuhn, 1998: 157, Weisgrau, 1997: 90). However, many of the small NGOs in Udaipur criticize Seva Mandir for monopolizing the development funding and as P.C. Mehta, who is a researcher at the Tribal Research

[31] http://www.sevamandir.org/OursupporterUSA.htm; accessed on 1 August 2008. The names of the donor agencies mentioned in this paragraph are collected from Seva Mandir's Annual Reports.

[32] As Kuhn (1998: 157) has noted, "Ajay Mehta is a soft spoken self-critical intellectual who represents the Rajasthan NGO sector at national and international level. His wife is an officer of the Indian Administrative Service….Both have spent some time at Harvard University in the United States and have many international contacts". Mr. Mehta holds a BA degree in Economics from Yale University and had been a consultant for the UNDP to evaluate poverty alleviation programs in the Middle East and Africa. Between 1979 and 1984, he worked for the Indian Railways Traffic Service. He is currently the Executive Director of National Foundation of India, which is a trust to support NGOs.

Institute in Udaipur and who did a study on Seva Mandir, notes that it did not deserve to be "the darling of the donor agencies" (cited in Kuhn, 1998: 158).

Data since 2004-05 show that the government funding constitutes only between 2 to 5% of Seva Mandir's budget. In 1996-97, ICCO/EED/CIVA contributed to 85% of its funding with a contribution of more than Rs. 25 million. It is true that the total budget of Seva Mandir was comparatively small during that time. However, it has increased over the years with the increasing contributions from ICCO/EED/CIVA and other aid agencies like the Plan International. ICCO/EED/ (EC/CIVA) contributed 57% (with more than Rs. 70 million) of Seva Mandir's funding in 2005-06, but this has dropped to 35% (around Rs. 34.4 million) in 2006-07 due to major changes in ICCO's funding criteria in 2002. Seva Mandir follows a more "project based" development approach but ICCO now gives more emphasis on organizations which follow "rights based" approach and who fight for the "rights and obligations" of the poor.[33] As Anita Bhatia rightly notes that "programme based and infrastructures are tough to attract money…" and between "right based and programme based funding, right based is getting more and more percentage".[34]

Seva Mandir's other major funding partner, Plan International, has contributed between 15 and 22% of funding (with the exception of the year 2002-03 when its share was only 7%) since 1999-00. However, it is observed that, in 2006-07, Plan International has increased its funding for Seva Mandir to 41% with a donation of more than Rs. 40 million, which is almost double the amount in 2005-06. It is primarily because Plan International follows a "child centered community development" approach and Seva Mandir has implemented the same approach through its child representative (*bal*

[33] http://www.icco.nl/delivery/icco/en/doc.phtml?p=622; accessed 5 August 2008
[34] Interview, 23 January 2007

pratinidh) programme. It is also observed that Seva Mandir's budget has gradually increased from Rs. 30 million in 1996-97 to Rs. 125 million in 2005-06.

Such sustainable and high-scale funding from international development aid agencies has made it possible for Seva Mandir to continue with its several development activities like natural resource development, education, health, women and child development, and so on. These incentives in the villages have brought people together into a common platform to work for the collective development of their community. The availability of funding and resources has enabled Seva Mandir to meet village people's demands for work and employment opportunities over time.

As a result, Seva Mandir has gained the goodwill and trust of the people in the tribal regions of Rajasthan. Furthermore, it has also maintained a highly cooperative relationship with the state and its various institutions in Rajasthan. It is thus evident that besides the legacy of Mohan Singh Mehta, Seva Mandir's large-scale funding from international donors, long-presence in the tribal areas, co-operative relationship with the state and its several success stories in grassroots development has all together established it as the "development hegemon" or the "node" of NGO activity in south Rajasthan.

The next section will examine the politics of people's participation in the village institutions and the implications of Seva Mandir's projects in the grassroots. It will be argued in this section that although the various development projects implemented by Seva Mandir in the villages have brought people together to discuss about the collective interest of the community, this participation of people in village institutions is, in most cases, induced by developmental incentives, i.e. employment opportunities generated through wasteland development projects, watershed programmes, JFM programmes,

health care facilities, and so on. Community planning is influenced by donor driven projects and the village institutions, which were built to create what Ajay Mehta would call sustainable "public agendas" at the grassroots level, have mostly remained dependent upon Seva Mandir.

Contrary to Seva Mandir's objective, these institutions are perceived not as the common institutions of the village with people having a stake in it but as institutions that are created by Seva Mandir for the implementation of its development projects in the village. This section concludes that "constructive" development approach, which aimed to create self-reliant and sustainable structures at the grassroots, have resulted in an "organized dependency" among the people as one of its unintended consequences.

4.4: Organized Dependency and the Politics of Participation

NGOs in Rajasthan emerged at a time when it was claimed that the state has failed to reach the grassroots and the discourse of development around the world was shifting to be dominated by the language of people's participation and bottom-up planning. It was also a time when international aid was increasingly channeled to create participatory model of development because "'participation' of the 'local population', 'project partners' and 'target groups' in development activities [was] regarded as the key to ensure the efficiency and sustainability of development projects", which ultimately lead to "strengthen self-help capacities, the civil society, and to promote democratization" (Kuhn, 1998: 1).[35]

[35] Morgan (1993: 4) has criticized the international development agencies for selling participation as a "one size fits all" rural development panacea without considering the relevance of citizen-state relationship and the prior history of citizen participation in a particular country.

Seva Mandir has, since the beginning, followed a participatory approach to grassroots development and encouraged the participation of the marginalized people in decision making process. Village level institutions, known as the *Gram Samuhas*, were formed to create a common space where people can discuss about their problems and take collective responsibility for community development. It was expected that village institutions will enable people to channelize their energies towards development; create self-reliance; lessen dependency on the state, and deny "power space" that is to say that they can opt out of social relationships that enfeeble people individually and collectively (*Comprehensive Plan Document*, 1994-99: 25). Voluntary collective action emerged as one of the solutions to grassroots problems.

As the data shows, Seva Mandir has opened up 541 village funds and 386 village committees with a membership of 47,000 households (*Annual Report*, 2007: 13). Around 60 to 80% of the people in the villages are the member of these village institutions.[36] Seva Mandir's paraworkers, such as the NFE workers, JSN workers, *Dai Maas* (birth attendants), *Vanpals* (forest protectors), and others, work as mediating agents to encourage people's participation in community planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of development projects. Despite of having a large membership, village meetings are, with some exceptions, attended by very few members. It often becomes the case that meetings are attended only by Seva Mandir paraworkers and the committee

[36] Interview with Anita Bhatia, 23 January 2007. Seva Mandir often measures the magnitude of its success on the basis of the number of household that have joined the committee, the number of villages it is working in, the number of paraworkers it has employed in the villages and the number of professionals it has appointed in the organization. This is clearly visible in all its reports which aim to catch the attention of the international funding agencies. Kuhn (1998: 159) has argued that all the documents of Seva Mandir are very "consciously written" and "are mainly meant for international and national donor agencies".

members. People come in large number when there is the possibility of development work or of employment opportunities.[37]

Meetings were attended by both male and female members of the village, the paraworkers, the committee members and the zone level workers from Seva Mandir. Discussions dominate around issues related to the needs and problems in their village which are often translated into demands in the form of a project proposal. However, as Weisgrau (1997: 101) has rightly pointed out, people's agenda is often preset and limited; and their demands always didn't coincide with the organization and strategy.

Bradley (2006: 140) has similarly argued in the context of Rajasthan that although the NGOs claim to have consulted the target community in the process of designing development programmes, in reality "…projects are largely planned prior to any contact with the community". According to Mosse (2005a: 5), "the techniques of participation (such as PRA) [are] the disciplinary technologies deployed to produce 'proper' beneficiaries with planning knowledge out of local people and their ways of thinking and doing". Seva Mandir has a large group of professionals, clerical, and accounting staff, who are hired as "technical personnel" to design, implement, and manage its various developmental projects (Kamat, 2002: 61-62; Franda, 1979: 177).[38]

The involvement of these professionals were justified on the basis of the technical knowledge, skills and expertise they possessed, which were believed to be necessary for the organization and for development.[39] These professionals also, suggests Jenkins (2001:

[37] According to Ramesh Nandwana not just the ordinary people and paraworkers participate in Seva Mandir activities because of developmental incentives but also its staffs work because they receive salary and other benefits (Interview, 21 November 2006).
[38] Data collected from Seva Mandir's Human Resource Department in February 2007 shows that out of 307 personnel, 56 are professionals (18.24%) who are graded into P1, P2, P3 and P4 categories.
[39] Interview with Anita Bhatia, 23 January 2007.

250), play important role in "foreign-aid priorities". However, as Chandhoke (2003b: 73-4) has argued, the so-called expert knowledge of the highly specialized development professionals who tell people how they should resolve their problems has in fact disempowered the lives of ordinary people.

Instead of making the community self-reliant, such knowledge has reproduced conditions that demand sustained intervention, which in a way justifies the existence and usefulness of the professional class as well as NGO sector itself (Chandhoke, 2003b: 75-6). It is not what people need but what Seva Mandir can provide to them. It is obvious that when people make project proposals about the need of the village, they are very much aware of the activities and functioning of Seva Mandir. They prepare proposals on issues which are feasible and on which Seva Mandir has been working. One of the staffs of Seva Mandir admitted this and declared that:

> …people in the area know what issues Seva Mandir is working on and they make proposals on those issues. They would not make proposals on which Seva Mandir is not working knowing that it would not be sanctioned. The people are very clever.[40]

Most often, the projects run by Seva Mandir in the village are also guided not by the demands of the people but by donor principles. For example, Seva Mandir's iron fortification project, a collaborative research intervention project with the MIT, was introduced to reduce anemia incidence among the tribals. As a part of the project, Seva Mandir provided training to the flour mill owners in the region and advised them to mix certain amounts of iron powder when people come to grind their wheat. It was observed that people were expressing suspicions and complaining about the project during a village meeting in Dhalla on 24 November 2006. They also complained that they don't

[40] Discussion with J, a Seva Mandir staff in Kotra Block office, on 31 January 2007.

remember when Seva Mandir organized a blood-testing camp in their village, which confirmed the high prevalence of anemia and thus eventually the introduction of the project. However, a letter issued by the General Secretary of Seva Mandir requested people to cooperate with the project.

Such top-down and donor driven development projects of Seva Mandir undermine not only the concept of democratic participation but also the autonomy of people and institutions at the grassroots. Chambers (1995) has rightly noted that top-down planning, top-down funding, and upward accountability negate participation. As one of the staff of Seva Mandir in Jhadol Block complained:

> …[p]reviously the development programmes were rooted in people's demands and were expressed through their planning and decision-making. Though this is not completely eroded, Seva Mandir now gives priority to the donors and implements their project in the village which may not be the primary requirement of the people at the time. Many of the projects are now imposed from the above (*uparse thopa hua*), for which they fail without having any substantial effect on the people.[41]

Besides the donor compulsions on the part of Seva Mandir, there could be two possible reasons why the village institutions and the people can not exercise absolute control over what kind of projects be implemented in their village: (1) beggars cannot be choosers, and (2) the prospects of getting benefited. The relationship between Seva Mandir and the people is very paternalistic, top-down and authoritarian which is clearly evident in its *Comprehensive Plan Document* (1990-93: 35) that points out that "[w]e continue our work if we feel our presence is considered to be useful to the people. The decision depends on whether the support we have to offer or the approach we feel desirable is also acceptable to the local people".

[41] Discussion with D, a Seva Mandir staff in Jhadol, during our visit to Dhalla on 24 November 2006.

Besides, participation in development activities does not mean that local people have become aware about development as a problem or right.[42] Rather it is because development projects provide employment and ensure livelihood. Chandhoke (2003b: 73) has argued that such lack of "self-realization" of developmental problems has in fact depoliticized the daily life of the people. Similar to Piven and Cloward's (1977: 286) observation in the American context, what seemed to be making increasing group formation and membership possible was the availability of special projects and developmental benefits from Seva Mandir as a way of inducing the villagers.

As observed during the fieldwork, villagers always ask for employment and work opportunities when a Seva Mandir staff visits their village. Participation of the villagers is always contingent upon the provision of development work and scope for employment generation. Participation becomes negligent and often almost to zero when there is no development work and is directly co-related with what benefit people directly receive. This shows that "[i]nstead of self-confident citizens who are aware of their rights and who demand fulfillment of their basic entitlements…people have been constituted as *consumers of delivery services*" (emphasis added, Chandhoke, 2003b: 77).

Kaluram Ji, a Seva Mandir paraworker in Dhalla village, noted that there are three benefits of the GVK for which people participate in it: (1) people get employment, (2) there is development in the village, and (3) there has been some savings and capital (*Punji*) in the village. People have gotten benefits from Seva Mandir before and when

[42] It was observed during the fieldwork that even chronic poverty and hardship did not lead poor people to make demands on the local government for public funding. They simply endured their hardship. See Piven and Cloward (1977) for an excellent discussion on this in the American context.

they do not get it now they feel less motivated. They come to attend the meetings when they have some motivation.[43] As a Seva Mandir field staff mentioned:

> People always ask for development projects which are not possible to provide all the time. Without development work in the village, it is difficult to organize people into a *Samuha.* People need some kind of *lalach* (luring/incentive) to stay connected with Seva Mandir and its activities. This is a common problem in all the places.[44]

Concrete developmental activities, according to Seva Mandir, will provide people practical experience of self-governance. But, due to increasing NGO competition for international development aid and the significant reduction of funding from its major partners like ICCO, EED, and EC, Seva Mandir is facing constraints related to development funding for which it is gradually withdrawing from physical development and service delivery activities.[45] For example, the spending on natural resource development has declined from Rs. 34.6 million in 2004-05 to Rs. 25.3 million in 2006-07. On the contrary, spending on women's empowerment and health education has increased during the same period (*Annual Report*, 2007: 83).

Village people do not consider education, women and child development and health activities as "proper" development (*vikash*) and this indeed is affecting the participation of people and functioning of the organization. Concrete developmental projects were the incentives to organize the tribal people and now when Seva Mandir is withdrawing itself from such activities, village people are showing less interest in it;[46]

[43] Discussion with Kaluram Ji, a Seva Mandir paraworker in Dhalla on 24 November 2006.
[44] Discussion with Sahid Khan, a Seva Mandir staff, while visiting to Kiara village on 14 December 2006.
[45] Seva Mandir was planning to cut down the number of paraworkers in Sadha village when I visited the village on 20 September 2006. This created a lot of dissatisfaction among the villagers.
[46] Concrete benefits do influence people's participation. As Kaluram Ji and D, a Seva Mandir staff, told me (on 24 November 2006), people (in Dhalla village in Jhadol Block) are not much interested to attend Seva Mandir's meeting but the meeting arranged by World Vision was over-crowded because it promised some

and people's participation in village committee meetings is, thus, decreasing. For example, as a member of the Sadha village committee told:

> …people now are not much interested to attend the *gram samuha* meetings since there has been not much "development work"[47] from Seva Mandir. Seva Mandir proposed a project to construct bathrooms for villagers but shifted the project to Jhadol block. Such decisions have dissatisfied people for which they have stopped coming to the village meetings for last three years. Although the village meeting is organized on the 18th of every month, it is attended only by the GVK president to make payments to the paraworkers.[48]

People don't express their feelings publicly but find some excuses to avoid the *Gram Samuha* meetings. This apprehension of overt public denial could be because of two basic reasons: (1) a sense of obligation for Seva Mandir of what it has done for the village, and (2) there is always a hope that it will bring some development schemes for the people. NGOs select their geography on their own and can't be forced to work in any specific village. Since Seva Mandir has chosen to work in their village, people remain ever grateful to the organization and its employees for providing welfare services and making them a part of the development process. It is, thus, their poverty, marginalization and the fear of loosing services that demand them not to question the legitimacy and credibility of the organization and often forces people to remain involuntarily subjugated.

Besides this, the members of the village committee are paid neither by Seva Mandir nor by the villagers, which also lessens their interest in and commitment to

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immediate benefits for them. Such observations were experienced in many other villages including Dhalla (on 24 Nov. 2006); Sadha (13 Dec. 2006 and 4 June 2008); and Dadhmiyan and Kiara (on 14 Dec. 2006).

[47] By development work, he means the concrete employment generation activities and not the health, *balwadi*, or JSN activities which though are still continuing in the village.

[48] Seva Mandir deposits salaries of the village paraworkers in the GVK account and it is the responsibility of the village committee to monitor the work of paraworkers and make the payment to them every month. Discussion with Mashroolal Ji, the treasurer of the village committee in Sadha, on 4 June 2008.

community development work and inhibits their participation.[49] It is clearly evident that participation of the people in village meetings for "creating public agenda" is incentive-induced and such strategies of organizing are proving to be unsustainable in the long run. In such a situation, when people avoid Seva Mandir's meetings with various excuses like we have guests at home, shows that development has not been realized by the people as a collective problem or right.

There has hardly been any spontaneous or self-mobilization on the part of village people to take up community development as their collective responsibility. Morgan (1993: 5) has rightly argued that "'induced participation' is 'sponsored, mandated, and officially endorsed'". Weisgrau (1997: 94) has also experienced similarly and noted that "[d]uring the time of my study I encountered no groups started by, staffed by, and directed by villagers themselves. Most of the organizations, no matter what their size, had offices in Udaipur, and these were organized and staffed by well educated, literate people with varying levels of ties to the rural communities". As Chandalia also tells:

> …they [the tribals] have in a way become dependent on NGOs and the initiative that should have been among the tribals on their own is missing. In fact, this is one of the major criticisms that the Marxists have against the NGOs that NGOs are in some way obstructing the process of social transformation by giving some kind of relief which is temporary and sort of diverting the energy of those idealistic youth who could have participated in the revolution which would bring some permanent change in their life.[50]

[49] These kinds of feelings were expressed to me by one of the members of Paleshar village committee on 22 September 2006. According to him, if we spend our time in the village affairs then there would be nothing to eat at home; and if the committee remains inactive and does not do much work they have to be accountable to the villagers and to Seva Mandir as well. Similar feelings were expressed by Sunderlal Ji and Sohanlal Ji who are the paraworkers in Sadha village in Kotra Block on 13 December 2006. According to them, it is *Nishulka Seva* (service without being paid).

[50] Interview, 7 January 2007

People's participation in development programmes is not a self-determined/self-mobilized decision on the part of the villagers rather it is enforced by NGO activists. People are asked to organize themselves, form committees and make plans in order to get benefits from Seva Mandir. The plans, which Seva Mandir claims are based on the needs of the people, are mostly determined by the projects available with it. As observed during the fieldwork, a staff of Seva Mandir visited a village in Mammer zone of Kotra block and asked the people to form the committee as soon as possible, so that they can run the NFE centre in the village by end July otherwise it will be delayed.[51]

My visit to different project villages in Kotra and Jhadol confirmed that most of these village level planning were project driven, and in that sense top-down, not bottom-up as claimed by Seva Mandir. Some of the members of the committee in Sadha village, which Seva Mandir considers as one of its model village in Kotra, narrated me about one instance which clearly reveals the top-down approach of Seva Mandir:

> In 2006, Seva Mandir came up with a scheme to construct bathrooms (*snanagar*) in Kotra block. They decided to do it in Sadha village. The staffs of Seva Mandir told us that the women of the village are bathing in open at the hand pump near road side, for which it is willing to construct bathrooms for all 522 families in the village and it will be done in two phases. According to the project, each family has to provide the required labour and pay 50 rupees and Seva Mandir will provide cement, brick, and the mason (*karigar*). It asked us to make a project proposal (*prastab*) and suggested that it should be made in the name of the females of the family. We submitted the proposal. But, in the mean time, the coordinator of Kotra block became transferred to Jhadol and Seva Mandir implemented the bathroom project in Jhadol block. When we enquired about our proposal, they replied that that was last year's project and when the new project comes, they will implement in Sadha village; but nothing has been done yet. The villagers are dissatisfied and have returned the collected money (50 rupees) to each family. Nobody is coming to attend the village meetings except the President and the village paraworkers.[52]

[51] During my visit to a village in Mammer zone with Sripal Ji on 9 June 2008.
[52] Discussion with the people in Sadha village in Kotra, including the treasurer of the village committee Mashroolal Ji and the JSN in-charge Sunderlal Ji on 4 June 2008.

Similar accounts were made by Gandhi Sarna village committee President, Laduram Gamar on 7 June 2008:

> The staffs (*prabhari*) of Seva Mandir asked us to make proposals for animal shed and bathrooms; they told us that they will give 60 to 70 bathrooms to our village. We submitted the proposals three months ago but there has been no response. Two years ago they asked us to write proposals on water tank at home; we wrote the proposal but no response. Three years ago we wrote proposals for *Samudayeek Bhawan* (community centre) but nothing has happened. Two years ago we wrote proposals for two *anicuts* (check dams) and for *med bandi* (a kind of land restructuring to stop erosion of soil); we have already showed them land for community centre and anicut building and submitted the name of one hundred and fifty peoples' name for *med bandi* but nothing has happened. Seva Mandir has done no development work in our village for last three or four years [although he accepts that *balwadis* and NFE centres are running].

These narratives refute the claims advanced by Seva Mandir and corroborates to what Cernea (1988) had declared: "[u]pon inspection, many NGO projects turn out not to be participatory despite their rhetoric, and involve 'enlightened' top-down control by the NGO themselves, sometimes along with control of decisions by local elites" (cited in Weisgrau, 1997: 97).

People's participation has become very ritualistic and their involvement in grassroots planning has remained confined only to Seva Mandir's projects. It has lacked the political clout to transform itself as a struggle for rights and engagement with citizenship. Although the village institutions created solidarity and networking, they have largely remained a common space where politically neutral citizenry become organized to receive social welfare services. The network of horizontal social relationship or social capital has not received any political clout to transform itself as a counter-hegemonic force for which corruption, unaccountability and oppressive social structures continue to dominate to social and political life.

Despite of being clean and efficient, one of the reasons why Seva Mandir has not involved itself in anti-corruption campaign is its amicable relationship with the state. Given its dependency on foreign funding, it does not want to antagonize the state. The "fear of backlash from the state" has thus compelled Seva Mandir to be "compromised" and depend on the government's goodwill to operate with any degree of effectiveness (Jenkins and Goetz, 2003: 136-7). For example, the people of Sadha village pointed out that the sarapanch and secretary are misappropriating money from the government run NREGA project, there has been improper measurement of work, low wage, irregularities in the attendance of school teacher and ANMs, electricity problem in their village.

Similar concerns were also raised in other villages like Magwas, Dadhmiyan, Damana Talab, and so on. Despite having such problems, the people have hardly taken any concrete steps. The village committee has also never presented project proposals on the problems faced by the village (like the electricity problem in Sadha) with the state and the panchayats, although they have done it with Seva Mandir. The irony is that people get organized in no time when there is any instance of *moutana* (death), but not for issues related to the development of their village.

Asked why they don't submit similar project proposals to the block office or to the panchayat, people in Sadha village replied that it is relatively easy to get projects from Seva Mandir. In the government offices, they have to deal with a very rigid and corrupt bureaucracy who hardly listens to them and in panchayat, people are not happy with the behaviour of the sarapanch – he works the way he wants. Besides this, the qualities of government projects are inferior in quality, due to the fact that officials cut their commission from the sanctioned budget. For example, as the people of Sadha

village pointed out, the *anicut* built by the panchayat was washed away in the rain where as the *anicut* made by Seva Mandir is still fine.

This relative ease of getting developmental projects has not only made the villagers "depend" on Seva Mandir for "wages and access" (Weisgrau, 1997: 91) but also unconsciously fostered a "patron-client relationship with [its] beneficiaries while largely ignoring overall social and political village affairs" (Kuhn: 1998: 258).[53]

James Ferguson (1994) in his celebrated study, *The Anti-Politics Machine,* has documented some such unintended consequences of development assistance in Lesotho. Following Foucault (1979), Ferguson has exposed the problems of "development industry" in Lesotho and showed how the planned social interventions have had unintended outcomes such as the expansion of bureaucratic state power "while simultaneously exerting a powerful depoliticizing effect".[54] As a result of such "side effects" or "instrument effects", the "development" apparatus in Lesotho has turned into what he calls an "anti-politics machine" (Ferguson, 1994: 18-21, 255).

In a similar manner, the development programmes of Seva Mandir have developed dependency and patron-client relationship, which has further been accelerated by ordinary people's inability to access the alternative sources of development such as the rigid and unaccountable government bureaucracy at the block office and the autocratic behaviour of the sarapanch at the local level PRIs.

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[53] Similarly, considering the dependency of the American poor on government welfare relief, Piven and Cloward (1977: 339) have declared that "the 'social pathologies' of the poor were redefined as having their cause in overly permissive relief arrangements, not in defective socio-economic arrangements".

[54] Foucault (1979), in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison,* has shown how certain institutions or programmes create effects that were never intended. The prison, according to Foucault, was built as a "correctional" institution to reform the criminals and instill the virtues of good citizenship among them. However, instead of eliminating criminality, they seem to have intensified it and made it impossible for the inmates to return to "normality".

Besides this, another reason for not making project proposals for the panchayat or the block office is that the villagers consider the committee as the committee of Seva Mandir. It has been created to look after the proper implementation of Seva Mandir's projects and not to create proposals for PRIs. Such accounts were made by the committee members in Sadha, Dadhmiyan, Gandhi Sarna, and many other places. The non-beneficiaries of Seva Mandir in several villages also revealed their indifference towards the village committee. Besides this, NGO activity within the village has accelerated the inter-caste antagonism and conflict over power and resources in the village (Weisgrau, 1997: 92; Kamat, 2002: 16). It is also observed that political interest and electoral competition has deeply divided the socio-political structure at the local level, which has been ignored by Seva Mandir. As Chowdhary has noted in the context of Bangladesh:

> …the most striking contradiction in activities are, while trying to work in development work with the rural poor, NGOs tend to become a substitute for traditional patron-client relationships; a new type of dependence emerges between the self-help initiators and the target groups who tend to become "recipients" of development while the NGOs themselves take over the functions of government and politicians and work only for the grassroots. They tend to antagonize the traditionally established elites and this creates tensions among these groups which may adversely affect programme implementation (cited in Weisgrau 1997: 92).

Integrated village structures have become the hotbed of factional politics that directly influence the developmental politics at the grassroots level. The 2003 panchayat elections have created many inter-caste factions in the villages of Mandwal, Talai, Nayakhola and several others. Mandwal was a very successful experiment of Seva Mandir where the village committee played a very active role. Ramesh ji, who belongs to the *Kangwa gotra,* is a government teacher and served as the President of the GVK. Ravinder ji, who belongs to the *Pargi gotra,* serves as the Secretary of the GVK and is very close to Seva

Mandir. Ramesh ji did not share a good relationship with Ravinder ji in the village. During 2003 panchayat election Ravinder ji contested for the post of sarapanch. Ramesh ji campaigned against Ravinder ji and asked his brother Tejaram ji to contest for the post, who later won the panchayat election.

This personal conflict between Ramesh ji and Ravinder ji got intensified to manifest itself in a conflict between two communities – the *Kangwas* and the *Pargis* – during the election and also to their respective *falas* (hamlets). Members of one community have destroyed the properties of the other. Supporters of Ramesh ji have also destroyed the boundary wall and other development projects created by Seva Mandir. Since then, there has been no village meeting and Ramesh ji has been asking to split the common village fund. He has also openly declared that his "villagers don't need any development" and "Seva Mandir should stop working in their village". As a result, Seva Mandir has recently stopped working in the village.[55]

Due to such political conflicts, people involved with Seva Mandir activities do not prefer to approach the sarapanch for any developmental projects. The sarapanch, on the contrary, also do not approve the projects sent by Seva Mandir committee. This has adversely affected not only the relationship between the local government, Seva Mandir and the villagers but also the very process of community development. The people of Sadha village mentioned that their sarapanch belongs to the communist party who often opposes Seva Mandir's YRC program thinking that it is dismantling his support base by deviating or disorienting the youths. As a result of Seva Mandir's unwillingness/failure to recognize or to engage with such deep-rooted politics that widely exists at the grassroots,

[55] This story was narrated by some of the villagers of Mandwal and Kantilal Pargi, a Seva Mandir worker in Mammer zone, Kotra, on 9 June 2008.

many of its development initiatives have become ineffectual and unsuccessful in the long-run (see Sethi, 1984: 307; Kamat, 2002: 16).

Seva Mandir, in its various publications, claims that one of its objectives is to develop leadership in the village so that people can take up responsibilities of future development. It has developed a well-trained cadre of paraworkers who can take up the leadership of the village development. These paraworkers have emerged as what Krishna (2006: 142) would call the *naya netas* (literally, new leaders) who "enable the villagers to participate more effectively in the activities of democracy and to share more equitably in its benefits". For Krishna, these new leaders, who are the product of the expansion of education in rural areas, are the "non-caste-based political entrepreneurs" and act as brokers between the citizens and the institutions of state.[56]

However, it is observed that the paraworkers, while working with Seva Mandir, have maintained a safe distance from the bureaucracy and other formal political structures of the state (see Krishna, 2002; 2006). Contrary to the expectations of Krishna, these paraworkers play a depoliticized role and act as the mediating (read, implementing) agency between the people and Seva Mandir.

In her book *The Waste Land: the Making of Grass-roots Leaders* (2004), Nandita Roy presents a chronicle of some of Seva Mandir's grassroots leaders and their exemplary work in transforming the village waste land in Udaipur district; many of who have also received the Umed Mal Lodha prize for leadership and community development. It was argued by Seva Mandir that these people are self-motivated to

[56] Contrary to Krishna, Mitra (1991: 391, 400) has talked about *gaon ka neta*, the traditional "dominant local elites", who draw their leadership from land, money, power and high social status. To him, these local elites mediate between the modern state and traditional society; and act as brokers in national, regional and local elections; lobbying and contacting the bureaucracy and higher political elites; and collective protest.

develop their village. However, it was observed that development of leadership is often contingent upon employment and most of these leaders were/are paid employees of Seva Mandir. It was also observed that these so-called grassroots leaders do nothing more than implementing Seva Mandir's imposed agenda of freeing the common land from encroachment, which is also controversial because it has sharpened factionalism and conflict in the villages, as it is seen Nayakheda village (Roy, 2003: 3-15). They do this work as long as they are the paid employees of the organization and stop working when they lose their jobs thus raising doubts about their motivations.

This is clearly evident in the case of Jalum Chand who was associated with Seva Mandir in his village Shyamapura in Jhadol block since 1982, first as NFE worker and then, as *Vanpal* (afforestation in-charge). He was responsible for "strategizing development" and vacating encroachers, which eventually created "conditions for the establishment of the first ever JFM site brokered by an NGO" (Roy, 2003: 18). His role as a grassroots leader was documented by Seva Mandir. In 2004, Jalum Chand was accused of corruption and was sacked from the organization.

However, Jalum Chand argues that he was a victim of organizational politics.[57] Villagers in Shyamapura say that when Jalum Chand was working as *Vanpal* in Seva Mandir, he was looking after the JFM. But since he was sacked, he is no longer looking after the JFM. He is now working in Shrasti Seva Sansthan, an NGO that is working in

[57] According to Jalum Chand (interview, 11 June 2008), he did not share a good relationship with the then Jhadol Block Coordinator because of his association with someone with whom the Coordinator had antagonistic relationship. He also mentioned that the Coordinator was trying to suppress the newly emerging leaders (*badi machhli chhoti machhli ko khatam karna chahte the*).

Jhadol. Although he is associated with Van Uthan committee, which is an organization of Seva Mandir, he is not working actively.[58]

It is also observed that the village committee in Shyamapura has been divided due to internal conflict and the JFM site has been is encroached by someone for last eight or nine years. There has been no meeting for long time in the village and the *Van Suraksha Samiti* (forest protection committee) and the GVK, both of which were built by Seva Mandir, are not functioning anymore since there has been no development work by Seva Mandir for long time.[59] The case of Shyamapura and Jalum Chand clearly shows the relationship between physical development and the participation of people and also the sustainability of institutions and leadership in the village.

The nature of the leadership was also evident in Seva Mandir's *Parivar Sathi* program in which a paraworker was employed by Seva Mandir to help people register births and deaths of their children at the panchayat and to mobilize them for the immunization. Since the government has introduced ASHA (Accredited Social Health Activist), who is responsible for similar activities, Seva Mandir has stopped this program. As a former *Parivar Sathi* from Gandhi Sarna told:

> ASHA is now responsible for the registration of births and deaths of children. Previously *parivar sathi* used to do it. But ASHA does not do the work and the *sachib* (panchayat secretary) has been calling me. But I am not going because I am no more working for Seva Mandir. It is ultimately the village which is suffering.[60]

Similar examples were also found in Sadha village where Seva Mandir decided to reduce the number of SHG (female) paraworkers from three to one. The SHG paraworkers were

[58] Discussions with Prabhulal Ji Angari and others in Shyamapura on 11 June 2008.
[59] *Ibid.*
[60] Discussion with Kantilal Gamar, ex-parivar sathi of Seva Mandir in Gandhi Sarna, on 7 June 2008

responsible to look after the running of self-help groups such as organizing women, transacting with the bank, spreading information, keeping record, and so on. These three female paraworkers were responsible for 10 *falas* in Sadha village. Seva Mandir asked the village committee to decide on one paraworker who will be responsible for the job, but the committee complained that it will be impossible on the part of one female paraworker to manage 10 *falas*. This ethical dilemma created conflicts and divisions in the village for which the villagers decided not to keep anyone. Since the female paraworkers stopped working, the SHGs in the village also stopped functioning.

It is evident from this example that even after more than 15 years of work (since 1992) in Sadha village and four years of organizing through SHGs, the female members of the SHGs are not willing to carry on their self-help group activities in the absence of the paraworker. The narration of the above stories clearly shows that developmental projects play an important role in organizing people in the villages and the absence of it makes participation of people and community development unsustainable.

4.5: Conclusion: Dependent Citizenship

Seva Mandir is one of the oldest grassroots development organizations in south Rajasthan. It emerged at a time when not only the Indian state had failed to reach out the poor and marginalized tribal population in the periphery but also the discourse of development was undergoing serious transformation. Participatory development, as promoted by the World Bank (1996) and other international aid agencies, was thought to be the "magic bullet" for developmental problems in the third world. It was believed that participation of the people in community planning will increase autonomy of the people

in decision-making, which will eventually lead to the strengthening of civil society and the empowerment of the marginalized people.

Influenced by such ideas, Seva Mandir started working with the marginalized tribal groups in south Rajasthan. By creating village institutions and by encouraging people's participation, it aimed to give concrete shape to the Gandhian idea of *Gram Swaraj* or village republics where the ordinary people will decide their own development agenda. Autonomous village institutions acted as the organizing force in the village that brought people together in a common network of relationship to take collective responsibility. Ordinary people participated in the decision-making and created "public agenda" for community development. Women also had their representation in the meetings. Such increasing network of relationship and trust among the people created a large pool of social capital in the village.

With the formation of village institutions, some villagers have managed their own affairs, discussed their collective problems, and worked for the development of their village. The development projects initiated by Seva Mandir not only provided economic opportunities for the people but also increased their education, awareness, and confidence. This is clearly mentioned by the people of Sadha village when they say that they, including the women of the village, are now more confident and are no longer scared of the oppressive state officials. Besides this, few village committees have also started using the GVK money to regenerate funds for the village, which shows the sustainability of grassroots social structures.

However, such success stories are limited in number and have generated many unintended consequences. One of the major problems, as discussed above, is the

incentive induced development approach, which has created a culture of "organized dependency" among the people. Although people have been organized through the common village institutions, they have always remained dependent upon Seva Mandir for developmental projects. Independent effort on the part of the village committee to seek development projects or to make demands either on government institutions (like the panchayat or block) or from any other NGOs has not been possible. It also demonstrates that the mere (apolitical) institution building is not sufficient to bring empowerment and democratization; and it has failed to generate forms of citizenship oriented towards self-reliance and sustainable change. It is because villagers perceive the committee as a creation of Seva Mandir for the implementation of its projects.

Although Seva Mandir has maintained a very close relationship with the various institutions of state, it has always preferred to refrain itself from political issues. Panchayat affairs are considered political issues. It was seen in the 1970s that Seva Mandir employees who fought and won panchayat elections either became alienated or gradually became co-opted by the existing corrupt power structure. The PRIs were believed to be inducing corruption and manipulation among the members and thus avoided by Seva Mandir and its beneficiaries (see Kuhn, 1998: 159).

Such ideological adherence of Seva Mandir has also dissociated its beneficiaries from having a critical engagement with the institutions of state. As a result, claim-making and large-scale mobilization and protest were discouraged in Seva Mandir. Village people also started speaking the language of Seva Mandir as it provided development opportunities and it was believed by the people that their involvement in large-scale mobilization and protest might annoy Seva Mandir for which it might withdraw from

their village since NGOs are free to choose their field and beneficiaries. As Kuhn (1998: 274) has rightly pointed out:

> …the contribution of NGOs to the "emancipation of the poorest" at the local level remains very limited because they select their beneficiaries according to their own priorities which reflect the values of the educated middle class. This approach does not enable the poorest, who lack bargaining powers vis-à-vis NGOs, to escape from the mechanism of patron client relationship.

The autonomy of decision-making of the village committee is seriously undermined by the donor driven development projects and people's participation has remained contingent upon the availability of development and employment opportunities. It is also observed that village institutions, which were formed with the objective to increase the self-reliance and sustainability of development projects, have, in most cases, remained just as the implementing institutions of Seva Mandir. Except a few, as in case of Vasela and Sahariya, none of the village institutions have used their fund to continue development activities and regenerate funds for their village.

Similar is also the case of women self-help groups, which were created with the objective of helping women to start small business and be self-sufficient, have remained unproductive. Most of the money from the SHGs is used for emergency needs like health care but not for any profit generative business.

Given this contradictory concerns, it is difficult to draw the general conclusion that Seva Mandir has contributed towards the empowerment of the marginalized and the strengthening of civil society. It is true, as discussed above, that the work of Seva Mandir has brought certain changes in the social, educational and economic environment. It is also true that it has given rise to a large network of social relationship and associational life or what Putnam would call social capital. The question, however, remains about

whether they are sustainable and autonomous. How long can Seva Mandir deliver such services to the rural poor? The question of "how to sustain continuing participation in the absence of continuing inducements to participation" has not been solved (Piven and Cloward, 1977: 287).

The village institutions created by Seva Mandir although has generated norms of reciprocity and horizontal network of civic engagement, they have predominantly remained "apolitical" and immobilized to make demands on the state and to keep its institutions accountable (see Webster, 1995; Thorlind, 2000). The centre of gravity of Seva Mandir has remained confined to the "micro-developmental" rather than "micro-political" arena (see Eldridge, 1995). Dependency seems to be one of the major obstacles in the process of democratic participation. This dependency is expressed through its paid leadership, politically non-engaged citizenry; patron-client relationship; and villager's continuous expectation for development projects.

Not only dependency but also the donor driven projects often question the approach of Seva Mandir that if people really enjoy the autonomy and sovereignty to decide the nature of their development. It is true that people often participate in the planning and implementation of their village development but mostly this is guided by Seva Mandir. Such participation has primarily lacked claim-making and an engagement with citizenship rights.

Popular participation has thus not resulted in sustainable and inclusive communities. People have hardly struggled to claim their rights from the state institutions and have hardly demanded political accountability. Instead, they have preferred to endure chronic poverty and tolerate corruption and injustice at the local level. This is because

Seva Mandir has become what Jenkins and Goetz (2003: 136) would call a "compromised ally" of the government and does not want to antagonize it. Seva Mandir has basically remained a large service delivery organization and acted as a "broker" between its beneficiaries and the government as well as the international aid agencies, thereby reinforcing the existing politics of development patronage.

Development, despite of four decades of Seva Mandir's work, has not become a people's movement; it has rather remained as a middle class NGO funded initiative primarily because the institutional structure of the organization has forbidden its involvement in confrontational "politics" (see Adedeji, 1997: 7; Morgan, 1993: 161). Similar to Harriss' (2006) findings in the context of service delivery NGOs in Chennai, "politics", for Seva Mandir, "is a dirty river". To conclude, as the Economic Commission for Africa has declared:

> …divorced from participation in citizenship, the concept of popular participation in development becomes a mere administrative strategy – a callous manipulation of the innocent and [the] ignorant even if the end result might be a "successful project" – but the end can never morally justify the means. Sadly, much of the current jargon about popular participation is based on the administrative desire for project success and effectiveness (cited in Adedeji, 1997: 11).

5

ASTHA SANSTHAN AND WELFARE RIGHTS ACTIVISM

5.1: Introduction

This chapter analyses the role of Astha Sansthan, which has developed a stance of critical collaboration with the state more in line with the neo-Marxist model of civil society that is contrary to the role of Seva Mandir as discussed in Chapter 4. This model emphasizes power relations in society and "entails a measure of conflict in both general ideological and specific policy contexts" (Eldridge, 1995: 74). According this model, civil society is a "counter-hegemonic" force that constantly engages with the state in "claim making" and "rights" to redress unequal power relations and structural problems, to transform the nature of the state, and to make it accountable to the interests of the people through community activism, political mobilization, and non-violent protest (see Chapter 2).

It is observed that NGOs in Rajasthan are largely involved in service delivery activities such as health, education, poverty alleviation, water conservation, income generation and so on (Bhargava, 2007). The "unintended consequences" of such activities has been, as the case of Seva Mandir shows, the development of patron-client relations, bureaucratic decision-making and a culture of organized dependency at the grassroots level, where people's participation serves merely as a medium to acquire welfare benefits (see Ferguson, 1994; Weisgrau, 1997; Li, 2007). The ordinary people in the village have

unconsciously become the "consumers of delivery services" rather than active citizens. This chapter focuses on Astha Sansthan[1] that has largely refused to engage in service delivery activities. It has, instead, adopted a movement-oriented approach and concentrates primarily on radical claim making and the building up of collective capabilities of the poor and marginal groups to demand their rights and entitlements.

Astha has developed a stance of "critical collaboration" with the state, which often entails a measure of conflict and confrontation (Eldridge, 1995; Riley, 2002: 22-3). Unlike Seva Mandir, which has a minimalist conception of the state, it has identified the state as the central instrument of engagement and contention and believes that "conscientization"[2] and "mobilization"[3] of the people can act as the prime mover of social change and sustainable development. Its emphasis on issue-based activism and welfare rights discourse has radicalized the everyday politics of development at the grassroots level, where people's participation has become a more direct part of their struggle for rights, entitlements and survival. This chapter agrees with the assertions made by Piven and Cloward (1979: 288) that "agitation among the poor around welfare issues [have] great potential for success"; and argues that the movement-oriented approach and activities as followed by Astha is more likely to contribute towards the formation of a democratizing civil society in Rajasthan.

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[1] This is very similar to Naila Kabeer's (2005) discussion of Nijera Kori, an organization that works with the poor in several districts in Bangladesh.

[2] The term was used by Brazilian radical educationist Paul Freire (1971) in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. It goes beyond mere "consciousness-raising" to include social and political action that transforms the oppressive structures in which the oppressed find themselves. It also refers to a process of "politicization", where the citizens constantly engage in identifying contradictions in experience through dialogue and becoming part of the process of changing the world. It could be considered as one of the prime medium to transform the civil into political (see also Goldbard, 2006).

[3] Piven and Cloward (1977: 284-285) argue that mobilizing should be distinguished from organizing. Contrary to organizing, mobilizing does not require people affiliate with an organization and participate regularly. It rather requires masses of people be mobilized to engage in disruptive action such as protests, sit-ins, strikes, etc. Although Astha does not distinguish between the two, it is more oriented towards mobilization, where it actively supports protests and sit-ins as effective measures of claim-making.

5.2: Ideological Orientation and Developmental Strategy

Astha Sansthan, which means an organization with "faith in people", was established in 1986 by a group of activists in Udaipur who left Seva Mandir and had worked in the development sector for 8 to 16 years. This group of activists left Seva Mandir for four basic reasons: (1) with the retirement of Jagat Mehta from the foreign service and his subsequent appointment as the new chief executive of Seva Mandir, the members were unhappy with the way the Mehta family had taken over the leadership of the organization, (2) with the change in management, Seva Mandir decided to follow a top-down service delivery approach to development or what it calls "constructive social work", which was unacceptable to the dissident group, (3) the new management did not allow a strategy of working with the people on issues and agendas chosen by them (Weisgrau, 1997: 86-87; Kuhn, 1998: 157; Astha Sansthan, n.d: 1), and (4) the influence of socialist ideology on the dissident group and their interest in radical politics also played an important role in their breakaway from Seva Mandir.

This group of people had worked with Seva Mandir in the tribal areas on issues of adult education and functional literacy. Their experience was that that NGO's physical development activities and welfare projects are inadequate towards fulfilling the needs of marginalized people and that it is also not possible for NGOs to provide services for an indeterminate period of time. They were also of the opinion that service delivery and project implementation involve a top-down approach to development and ignore, what Tania Li (2007: 11) calls, "political-economic questions – questions about control over the means of production, and the structure of law and force that support systemic inequalities". For them, the prevailing discourse of development is purely an apolitical

act that aims not just to maintain a status quo but also to produce an impotent class of people, incapable of revolution (Kamat, 2002: 75). As a response to this, Astha was born "in the (few) people's refusal to abandon a struggle, and consequently, a refusal to stay within the confines of the development discourse" (*ibid.*).

Astha became registered as a voluntary organization to work for the empowerment of poor and marginalized tribal communities. Its objectives and activities have been heavily influenced and guided by the communist and socialist thinking derived from Mahatma Gandhi, Marx, Mao, Freire, and Jayaprakash Narayan. Although Astha does not openly support any particular political party or subscribe to any particular ideology, it is widely believed to be linked to the Communist Party in Rajasthan.

However, it should be noted that the communists have had a very weak support base in Rajasthan (see Table 5.1). Although their movement began in south Rajasthan in the late 1960s it was suppressed by the state. Rajasthan has mostly been ruled by the Congress and, in the 1990s, it was the BJP that came to dominate the political scene. Currently, the communists hold only three seats in the Rajasthan State Assembly. This is perhaps one of the reasons why Astha's relationship with the Left parties remains invisible in the political domain. Besides this, Astha supports the Congress party for its secular, non-violent, Gandhian, and pro-poor political ideology.

Table 5.1: Voting for Left Parties in Rajasthan: 1952-2003

Name of Party	1952	1957	1962	1967	1972	1977	1980	1985	1990	1993	1998	2003
Socialist	1 (3.93)	--	5 (3.68)	--	4 (2.44)	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
CPI	0 (0.59)	1 (3.02)	5 (5.40)	1 (0.97)	4 (1.56)	1 (1.12)	1 (0.97)	0 (0.81)	0 (0.85)	0 (0.33)	0 (0.20)	0 (0.19)
CPI (M)	--	--	--	0 (1.18)	0 (0.96)	1 (0.75)	1 (1.20)	1 (0.98)	1 (1.03)	1 (0.91)	1 (0.81)	1 (0.77)

Source: Election Department (2004).

Astha considers its "activities as a form of ongoing action research aimed at evolving an alternative development strategy based on democracy and social justice" (Eldridge, 1995: 74). Its reports claim that it learns things "from a process of 'praxis' – Action, Reflection On Action, Leading To New Action And New Reflection On That Action and so on" (Astha Sansthan, n.d: 12). Field experience and history constitute two of the major sources of knowledge and influence for the members of this organization.[4]

Astha has integrated the ideas of Marx (class, exploitation and revolution) with that of Mahatma Gandhi (non-violence and *Gram Swaraj*) and followed a unique method of non-violent struggle (*satyagraha*) to transform the exclusive and exploitative pattern of social relationship in the tribal society and to address its structural and historical problems. It has publicly denounced the utilization of any kind of violence to achieve goals. As Ashwani Paliwal, a founding member of Astha, pointed out:

> …everyone is organized here… [and] often protest for their interests and rights… but one thing is clear that there should not be any kind of violence and destruction of public property. We are against it. No solution can be reached through violence in today's world….We support non-violent negotiation and peaceful way of pressurizing to realize the rights and demands.[5]

Unlike the radical Marxists who reject democracy as a bourgeois form of governance and do not recognize the role of the state and Constitution, Astha has used democratic means and adopted constitutional values and the rule of law as important mediums to engage with the state, which it considers as the legitimate and dominant agent of transformation in society. This is also because the Constitution is fundamental to India's governance; it holds the state responsible to ensure the availability of food, shelter, education, health,

[4] Interview with Ashwani Paliwal, a founding member of Astha, on 16 January 2007 in Udaipur.
[5] *Ibid*.

and employment to all its citizens, which directly corroborates Astha's right-based approach to tribal development. According to its *Annual Report* (2005-06: 1):

> …the Preamble, the Fundamental Rights, and Fundamental Duties have inspired and motivated the Astha team for the last 20 years. Astha works with the people to claim their rights, and perform their duties as citizens. The document [Constitution] guides the Astha team and gives legitimacy to the struggles taken up with the people.

However, despite various constitutional provisions in India, the poor and illiterate tribals or the so-called "un-modern masses" have been deprived of their basic citizenship rights and welfare entitlements. The state has not only failed to protect these citizens' rights but has actively contributed to their violations (see Kothari, 1986; 1988; Nandy, 1987; Giri, 2002: 295). Following this, the founding members of Astha devised alternative strategies to politically mobilize people. Instead of being involved in apolitical service delivery and large-scale project implementation like Seva Mandir, Astha focused upon right-based claim making, "training and advocacy work for tribals" and supported the organizing of "political campaigns such as protest rallies and sit-ins" (Kuhn, 1998: 160).

Astha considered protest activity as a meaningful "political resource" (Lipsky, 1968) and believed that mobilization, training, political consciousness, and struggle for rights and entitlements are important instruments to empower people, to transform the nature of society and to establish a social order based on equality and social justice (Astha Sansthan, n.d.: 6).[6] As mentioned in its website:

> Astha does not parallel the Government, does not do what the government should be doing. Astha's role is to help the poor, marginalized, deprived and exploited to access government schemes and resources, to make use of government laws

[6] Some of the slogans used to bring awareness and mobilize people are - *Sangathan May Shakti Hai* (Strength is in Organization) and *Gyan May Shakti Hai* (Knowledge is Power).

> intended to help the poor. This is part of the work of helping the poor to become organized and aware, and to work effectively on the problems they face.[7]

Similarly, Ashwani Paliwal also declared that:

> …constructions of small dams, plantation of trees, and physical development work are necessary for the people and larger developmental process… [However] if all NGOs work for the development of people's power, and protection and advancement of people's rights, then the [developmental] map of the country could be fast transformed… The physical development work is anyway undertaken by the government.[8]

Astha has advocated that the prevalence of poverty, inequality and hunger in tribal society are the manifestations not simply of individual deprivation but also of underlying structural inequities such as the oppressive structure of caste and feudalism as well as the paternalistic style of administration (Astha Sansthan, n.d.: 6; Kabeer, 2005: 183; Pant, 2005: 92). To them, poverty also means "submission to cultural rules that convey a complete lack of recognition of poor people as subject bearers of rights" (Dagnino, 2005: 153). Following this, Astha started working in the tribal-dominated Kotra block and became heavily involved in redressing the historical injustices carried out against the tribal people by traders/money-lenders, feudal lords and the various local-level agents of the state such as the police, the forest guards and the land revenue officers.[9]

Political education of the poor was considered by Astha as the first step for grassroots democratization because it builds up confidence in the poor and also acts

[7] http://www.astha.org/; accessed in December 2008.
[8] Interview, 16 January 2007.
[9] Gupta (1995: 375-6), in his work on ethnography of the state, has brilliantly discussed how the different aspects of the state are manifested in the everyday life of the people and in public culture. Discussing the discourse of corruption in a in a village in North India, Gupta argues that corruption is not a "dysfunctional aspect of state organizations", it is rather a key arena "through which 'the state' itself is discursively constituted".

against oppression and unfreedom based on knowledge of their rights as sovereign citizens (Kamat, 2002: 22; Korten, 1990). According to Gibbon (1996), the mere deepening of civil society is not sufficient to bring about democracy and development; what improves democratic performance in a society is the radical politicization of civil society where politically conscious citizens are able to articulate demands in civil society. One such example in India is the so called "Kerala Model"[10], whose success is a result of the increasing civic and political engagement or "public action" in Kerala (Dreze and Sen, 1995) and is "based on the growing consciousness among the underprivileged that their individual and collective rights are a result of collective struggles for access to basic services" (Tharakan, 2004: 114).

By mobilizing people into organized groups, developing collective leadership and by leading people's struggles, Astha has been instrumental in politicizing certain sections of the tribal society. It has also maintained strong community consultations and held hundreds of training programmes to educate tribal groups about their rights and to bring about awareness of the exploitative structure of social relationship that has kept them poor and marginalized for generations. For example, a former Seva Mandir employee admitted that the workers and villagers associated with Astha are much more informed, confident, and politically aware than that of Seva Mandir.[11]

Added to this, Astha has educated people about their voting rights and the way government and governance works. These activities of Astha are based on the belief that "empowering the *adivasis* with knowledge of the laws of the nation and their own rights"

[10] Kerala Model refers to the high achievements of the Indian state of Kerala on indicators of human development such as literacy, life expectancy, and infant mortality rates, despite of being economically underdeveloped (see Heller, 1994: 1-14; Frank, 1995).
[11] Discussion with A, a former Seva Mandir employee in Jhadol block, on 5 June 2008.

will challenge not only "the arbitrary nature of power exercised at the local level" but also "those laws that are unjust and sustain domination" (Kamat, 2002: 122).[12] As Ashwani Paliwal declares:

> …people should have political awareness or consciousness without which nothing could be done. Unless people understand how political parties and the governments function nothing could be done. Once they understand, the people then can make negotiations and bargain with the political parties. They can ask the parties that we have these problems and what would be your say on this. People should be politically aware and sensitized. I am not talking about party based politics but the way our society is governed. The more the people are aware about the system, the more the representatives will be accountable to the people. The representatives think that no one is asking us, so let it go the way it goes. We try to enhance people's political awareness by which not only the democratic system gets strengthened but also the ordinary people become autonomous and empowered. We now don't have to fight with the British; now it is our legislation and system and we have to deal with it, change it, and transform it. We thus need to understand the political process. The gap between the way government and governance is run and the level of awareness people have about it could only be solved through political awareness and sensitization and, without this, there could be no social change in society.[13]

In a society characterized by corruption, clientilism and a highly feudal and paternalistic bureaucracy, Astha's strategy can be described as one of "growing citizenship from the grassroots" (Kabeer, 2005: 184; see also Pant, 2005). Astha's grassroots activities and issue-based struggles are carried out by its several people's organizations (POs) and support societies that are spread throughout south Rajasthan (*Annual Report*, 1986-88).[14] These POs, commonly known as *sangathans*, are different from Seva Mandir's *Gram Samuhas* in the sense that the primary objectives of these *sangathans* are to prepare politically aware citizens (*logon ki tayari*) and to guide openly and actively their

[12] As Gran (1983: 160) has argued, "development inherently *implies reduction of power differentials*".
[13] Interview, 16 January 2007.
[14] Support Society is a registered Society that has a relatively small membership, formed mostly of members of the PO for which it was formed to "Support". The POs all remain unregistered organizations, for reasons of flexibility and autonomy. But sometimes, the POs may need to have a legal entity which can help it to do something it wants to do e.g. take a training programme from the government, purchase land for an office, raise funds; and so, the PO and Support Society combination (*Annual Report*, 2006-07: 38).

struggles not just for citizenship rights and welfare entitlements but also against the exploitative forces at the local level.[15]

In a way, the *sangathans* act as the pressure groups of the tribal people. As Kamat (2002: 121) writes in the context of Maharashtra, the aims of these *sangathans* are "to create a strong sense of political efficacy and power among the tribals to resist and challenge state and elite oppression of tribals and other disempowered peoples, and force changes in these relations of oppression-repression that seemed to be immutable". In contrast to these organizations, Seva Mandir's GVCs have largely functioned as "the administrative units" and implementing agents of development projects at the grassroots level; they have maintained a safe distance from any kind of political involvement.

Currently, Astha works with eight different POs such as (1) *Adivasi Vikash Manch* – Tribal Development Forum; (2) *Adivasi Mahila Jagriti Samiti* – Tribal Women's Awareness Society; (3) *Rajsamand Mahila Manch* – Rajsamand Women's Forum; (4) *Jarga Vikash Sansthan* – Jarga Development Society; (5) *Vagad Mazdoor Kishan Sangathan* – Vagad Labourers and Farmers Association; (6) *Godwaad Adivasi Sangathan* – Godwaad Tribal Association; (7) *Ekal Nari Shakti Sangathan* – The Association of Strong Women Alone; and (8) *Samarthak Samiti* –The Rajasthan Forest Produce Collectors and Processors Groups' Support Society.

These POs are the unregistered associations (*sangathan*) of the people, which are initiated and guided by Astha to work on issues that affect the tribal population. They have remained unregistered because the government retains the right to deregister and

[15] According to Westheimer and Kahne (2004: 240), there are three kinds of citizens such as: (1) the personally responsible citizen – law-abiding members of society, who act responsibly in his/her community; (2) the participatory citizen – active member of community organization/or improvement efforts; and (3) the justice-oriented citizen – critically assesses social, political and economic structures and addresses areas of injustice. Astha's objectives show that it is committed towards the last one.

ban organizations of political nature without being a political party (Biswas, 2006: 4409). Since Astha carries out its mobilizational activities and people's struggles through these organizations, it has preferred not to register them. It sometimes provides projects (not service delivery projects like immunization) that involve mobilization and awareness building such as NREGA campaign, *Jungle Jamin* campaign, RTI campaign, etc. to these POs; it however ensures that they don't become dependent on it. In order to make them both financially and structurally independent, Astha has facilitated the registration of separate organizations which will receive mobilizational projects to run these POs. For example, it has opened Kotra Tribal Association in 1998 to provide financial support to the *Adivasi Vikash Manch*.[16] These POs also enjoy autonomy in selecting issues, devising strategies, receiving projects, and leading struggles.

Along with the *Adivasi Vikash Manch*, every year in September, Astha organizes a tribal gathering (*sammelan*) in Kotra called the *Milan Mela*, which is an annual educational and awareness gathering attended by approximately 10,000 people from different regions of Rajasthan. The POs mobilize the tribals from their locality to attend the gathering in Kotra. Astha activists also travel around in the region to spread the word about the *Sammelan*. On the day of the *Milan Mela*, tribals enter Kotra in large numbers marching through the streets and shouting slogans about their rights and entitlements. These slogans focus on tribal people's rights to food, education, and employment as well as to dignity, justice, equality, and self-governance.[17]

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[16] *Adivasi Vikash Manch*, established in 1992, is working in 365 villages of Udaipur and Sirohi districts of Rajasthan. It has a membership of 6,515 people (*Annual Report*, 2006-07: 44).

[17] Some of the slogans in 2006 *Milan Mela*, which I attended, were *Kya Mange Mzdoor Kishan, Bhojan, Shiksha aur Samman* (What are the demands of the labourers and peasants? – food, education and dignity); *Nyay, Samanata Ho Adhar, Aisa Rachenge Hum Sansar* (Justice and equality be the basis of human society); *Kam Bina Kamayee Nahin, Kamayee Bina Bhojan Nahin, Bhojan Bina Jeeban Nahin* (No work no wage, no wage no food, no food no life); *Gaon Mein Raaj Kiska Hei, Humara Hei* (Who governs the

This gathering acts as an open democratic space where issues are discussed, experiences are shared, and strategies for collective struggle are prepared. The tribal people, who have arrived from different parts of the state, present their problems and difficulties at the *Milan Mela.* On this basis, Astha, along with its people's organizations and participants, decides on the major problems that need urgent attention or affect a majority of the tribal population. The *Milan Mela* thus helps Astha decide its issues every year. For example, after considering the flood situation and loss of agriculture, it was decided in the *Milan Mela* 2006 that Astha will be working with its POs on issues of food security and *Rojgar* (employment) guarantee. Besides this, it has previously worked on issues like forest rights, right to information, tribal control over natural resources, *Jal, Jungle, Jamin* (water, forest and land), and so on. As some participants (Group A) at the 2006 *Milan Mela* pointed out that:

> …it rained heavily this year; the flood washed away all our crops. Many of our houses have also been destroyed. We have nothing to eat at home. We need seeds; we need job and employment. We have come here [*Milan Mela*] to discuss about it and present our demands to the government (*Sarkar*)….[18]

The *Milan Mela* also acts as a platform to openly discuss and critically evaluate the strategies and activities that were undertaken in the previous year. In doing so, Astha becomes aware of its strategic strengths and weaknesses. In the *Milan Mela*, Astha invites several grassroots activists and government officials who work on tribal issues to share their experiences and suggest strategies to address the problems of tribal society. Some very renowned activists who have previously attended Astha's *Milan Mela* are

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villages? – we, the people); *Kya Mange Mazdoor Kishan, Loktantra Ki Sahi Pehchan* (What are the demands of the labourers and peasants – implementation of democratic rules); *Humara Paisa Humara Hisab, Hum Janenge, Hum Ziyenge* (Our money our account, we deserve to know).

[18] Discussion with Group A participants at the *Milan Mela* in Kotra on 23 September 2006.

Aruna Roy, Rajendra Singh, Pradeep Prabhu, P.V. Rajgopal, and others. These activists educate the tribals about their rights and entitlements, and provide information to them about the various government policies.

The 2006 *Milan Mela* was attended by activists like Kavita Shrivastava and Harsh Mander. They spoke about the Rajasthan government's plan to handover the mid-day meal programme to the Nandy Foundation. Given the extreme poverty of the region, they urged people to demand 365 days of employment guarantee to every adult individual, instead of 100 days granted by the government. They criticized the newly released BPL list, which noted that the percentage of poverty has declined in the tribal regions and increased in the agriculturally developed regions of Rajasthan.[19] The *Milan Mela* thus acts as a public space for political conscientization and democratic awakening among the tribals. As some participants (Group B) at the 2006 *Milan Mela* in Kotra mentioned:

> … before this, we had no idea about the government's programmes. We didn't know about the *Rojgar* [employment] guarantee schemes; we didn't know how to get work from the *Sarapanch.* The [Employment Guarantee] Act says that we can get work from the panchayat within 15 days of registering our names. Now we know this. We can go back and ask the *Sarapanch* to provide us work.[20]

Some other participants (Group A) at the 2006 *Milan Mela* in Kotra noted that:

> …we also didn't know about the newly released poverty list of the government. We have nothing to eat at home; all our crops and houses are destroyed in the rain. And the government is saying that the poor tribals here [south Rajasthan] have become richer, and rich peasants [in agriculturally developed regions] have become poorer? This is unfair…we don't know if our names are there in the new list; we will go back and check about it.[21]

[19] These were mentioned in the speech of Kavita Shrivastava at the *Milan Mela* in Kotra on 23 Sept. 2006.
[20] Discussion with Group B participants at the *Milan Mela* in Kotra on 23 September 2006.
[21] Discussion with Group A participants at the *Milan Mela* in Kotra on 23 September 2006.

In order to address the problems of the tribal society, Astha and its POs, along with the people, plan and devise strategies for the year's chosen issues. Once the issue is identified, leaders are chosen from the community and an issue-based struggle committee is formed. Special training sessions are arranged by Astha to equip the leaders and the community members with necessary information and strategies. Activists and legal experts are invited to speak on the issues and suggest strategies for further action. As a result of this, the community leaders or who can be referred to as the *naya netas* become increasingly aware of the legal and political implications of the problem, helping them organize more efficiently for the struggle.

These community leaders, unlike in Seva Mandir, are not the paid employees of Astha. They are chosen by and from among the ordinary people in the villages to represent their problems, to lead their struggles and to engage with the institutions of state. These leaders play pivotal role in spreading of information and generating political awareness in the community. They mobilize people and address community issues through a right-based "claim making" approach, where mass based mobilization strategies are employed to advance collective interests.[22]

According to Wada (2003: 163), "claim making is a public act. Claim makers must justify that their claims are worthy and legitimate. To do this, they interpret and frame their interests and discontents, evaluate their circumstances, define public issues, and choose strategies rationally". Astha has followed the Constitution to justify its demands and argued that the demands for socio-economic rights are legitimate claims in

[22] According to Tilly (1978: 144-7) there are three kinds of claim-making: competitive, reactive, and proactive. Competitive claim-making is "claim to resources also claimed by other groups, which the actor defines as rivals, competitors, or at least participants in the same contest". Reactive claim-making is "reassertion and defense of established claims when someone else challenges or violates them". Proactive claim-making is the "claims which have not previously been exercised" (see also Wada, 2003: 164).

order to achieve equality and social justice. For example, the need for food security was projected through the people's right to life and right to food. Issues of political and bureaucratic corruption and unaccountability were addressed through the RTI. Astha also works on people's right to forest land, minimum wage, NREGA and so on.

These right-based claims provide Astha and its POs the legitimate ground to mobilize ordinary people to engage with the state and to fight for their basic rights and entitlements. As Mehta (2005: 246) writes, "rights…are the basis of access to resources and commodities upon which real claims can be made. They also entail an element of justiciability, and this legal protection can in principle provide grounds for redress in cases of accountability failures, and for mobilizing resources at local and global level".

Following this, people's demands are presented to the concerned authorities and institutions. Lobbying, advocacy, and networking strategies are also used to influence the authorities' decisions. If lobbying and advocacy fails to bring about the desired social change, people employ legal procedures by filing cases and public interest litigation (PIL) in the judicial Courts.[23] They also organize mass demonstrations, non-violent protests, sit-ins, rallies (*dharnas*), hunger strikes, and street-marches to pressurize the concerned authority to respond to their demands.

Such open and direct participation of people in claim making activities has not only made the tribals more conscious about their citizenship and welfare rights but also forced the state to become more responsive to the needs and demands of the poor and marginalized. To cite one example, the people of Kadha village in Kotra pointed out that:

[23] PIL, in Indian law, means litigation filed in a court of law for the protection of "public interest". In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the Supreme Court focused on the protection of human rights traditionally regarded as civil and political rights. But since the mid-1980s, it has encouraged petitions on social and economic rights – the right to food, education, health, environment, and so on (see Sahoo, 2007b: 19-20).

> When Astha came to our village in 1987, we thought it is like other *Sanstha* [NGO] which will work for 2 or 3 years and leave. We never thought this will stay in touch for such a long period of time. It has helped us many ways. It has organized numerous meetings and provided information on a lot of things like *Jungle Jamin Andolan*. The government officials, panchayat members, *Patwari* [revenue officer] or *Van Vibhag* [forest] officers never told us anything about this. Rather, the *Patwari* and *Van Vibhag* officers used to harass us for staying in forest, and ask us *Bhatta* [bribe]. But, this is no longer the case. People in our village are now more aware of things. We have been to Kotra and Udaipur to stage protest on *Jungle Jamin Andolan,* which has been going on for long time. The government has recently passed the law and we have now set up a committee to look after the land regularization. Astha has also helped some of our villagers recover their jewelleries from the *Sahukars* in Swarupganj, Pindwara, Sirohi and Abu Road….[24]

However, the demands of the people have not always been successful. Success of a claim depends on a variety of factors such as the nature of the claim and approach adopted, the strength of the interest groups involved, response of the state, and so on. Before discussing this, it is important to explore Astha's involvement in grassroots development activities and its relationship with the institutions and agencies of state.

5.3: The Role of Astha in Grassroots Development

There are two ways in which Astha carries out its activities: (1) fieldwork activities undertaken by its POs in Udaipur, Rajsamand, Banswara, Sirohi, and Pali districts in south Rajasthan to understand the lives and problems of the poor, to create political consciousness, and to mobilize people for right-based struggles; and (2) resource centre that is involved in training, campaigning, advocacy, networking, lobbying with the government to change the policies (Astha Sansthan, n.d: 6-11). Although Astha works on the various issues that affect the tribal society, its primary areas of concern have been local self-governance (i.e. the PRIs), women, and livelihood issues (Kuhn, 1998: 160).

[24] Discussion with the people of Kadha village of Kotra block on 6 June 2008.

5.3.1: *Panchayati Raj and Local Self-Governance*

Panchayat Raj is a system of self-governance where the rural people elect their local level political representatives to the village councils. It has two aspects – one is democratic and the other is institutional. The former is related to the mobilization and participation of citizens in local decision-making and the fulfillment of their political aspirations, while the latter is related to effective institutional performance for the delivery of benefits flowing from various government programmes (*Social Watch*, 2006).

Though the institution of Panchayati Raj was initiated by Nehru on 2nd October 1959, the process became dormant after a few years. It became the mechanism of power for the upper caste male members for the realization of their vested interest. However, the 73rd Constitutional Amendment of 1992 revived the institutions of local governance, diversified the power structure and transformed the political hierarchy in rural communities. It incorporated a plurality of voices into village institutions and extended power to the ordinary people (Fehling, 2000). For example, it provided political space for the hitherto excluded or marginalized groups like women, scheduled castes (SCs) and scheduled tribes (STs) to decide their own development. The Panchayati Raj Extension to the Scheduled Areas (PESA) Act of 1996 identified *Gram Sabha*[25] as the nucleus of all activities, with wide-ranging powers in the Fifth-Schedule areas[26], and this provided self-rule to the bulk of the tribal population (Singh, 1999).

However, due to the prevalence of large-scale illiteracy and ignorance of legal procedures, the SCs, STs and women have not been able to participate actively in the

[25] *Gram Sabha* is a body consisting of persons registered in the electoral rolls of a village or a group of villages which elect a Panchayat.

[26] Essentially the Fifth-Schedule is a historic guarantee to indigenous people on the right over the land they live in. It covers tribal areas in 9 states of India namely Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Orissa and Rajasthan.

process of local self-governance. According to the Census 2001, the illiteracy rate in the tribal dominated Udaipur district is 64.3%, of which 49.7% are male and 79.4% are female. Considering this situation, in 2001, Astha decided to work on the issues of local governance and tribal self-rule and has played important roles in the strengthening and empowerment of the PRIs by providing trainings to the elected men and women representatives.[27] Such training has helped these representatives become aware of the administrative procedures and deal with the panchayat issues. As some of the elected representatives who attended the Panchayat Awareness Forum (*Panchayat Jagruk Manch*) of Astha during 12 and 13 February 2007 mentioned:

> We have learnt a lot from Astha….The volunteers of the *Sangathan* [Astha's POs] visit our villages and inform us about the functioning of the panchayat, the various projects of the government (*Sarkar*) for the poor tribal people and also about our rights (*Adhikar*). They tell us how to contest in elections. In panchayat trainings, Astha teaches us about our rights, responsibilities and duties…how to write proposals (*Prastab*) and get [development] projects from the [block and district levels of the] government.[28]

Astha has formed citizen's forums in order to make members and local villagers aware of the roles and responsibilities of *Gram Panchayats* and *Gram Sabhas*. It is now working with such forums in 53 panchayats in Rajasthan which act as the "watch-dog" of the elected representatives (*Annual Report*, 2006-07: 10). Astha works for the effective implementation of 73rd Constitutional Amendment and tribal self-rule (TSR) under the PESA Act which came into being in 1999 in Rajasthan. But, the government has not framed any specific rules for the operation of PESA Act even after 8 years of its enactment.

[27] According to Ashwani Paliwal, Astha's capacity building programmes include 20% male and 80% female elected representatives (Interview, 12 June 2008).
[28] Discussion with *Sarapanchs* who attended *Panchayat Jagruk Manch* of Astha during 12-13 Feb 2007.

Astha, along with 2 TSR *Gram Sabhas,* has filed a PIL against the government in the Rajasthan High Court that is ongoing. In south Rajasthan, which fall under the Fifth Schedule, it has organized a network called the Southern Rajasthan Village Republic Council, which includes NGOs and *Gram Sabha* members, to work for the rights of the tribals over natural resources and other issues like minerals, debt issues and whether to have liquor shops or not (*Annual Report*, 2006-07: 12).

During the time of election Astha invites the prospective political candidates to address the local people who also present their problems before the candidates and ask them about what they could do to solve the problems. This provides an opportunity for the local people to learn how to demand their claims from the representatives; it also increases the autonomy and bargaining power of the people, strengthens their control over decision-making process, improves their power in holding the public officials accountable, and aids in changing the direction and nature of political process towards becoming more democratic and people oriented.

Besides this, Astha has been lobbying the government of Rajasthan to make panchayat bodies "self-reliant to achieve the goal of *Gram Swaraj* and provide [them] with adequate funds to plan out their activities for development of villages" (*The Hindu,* 13 February 2008). It has argued that most of the welfare and developmental budget of the government has been implemented through the rigid bureaucratic structure; and the PRIs receive only 2.18% of the state revenue.[29]

In order to discuss this, it organized a dialogue session with the Panchayati Raj Minister on 26 August 2006 where more than 400 elected representatives participated (*Annual Report*, 2006-07: 8). The people's representatives pointed out that panchayats

[29] See http://www.indiatogether.org/govt/local/articles/arc-rajasthan.htm, accessed on 26 August 2008.

are dependent on the government and do not have enough financial capacity to implement the proposals received from the *Gram Sabhas.* As a result, panchayats have simply become the implementing agencies of the government without having enough autonomy (*The Hindu*, 13 February 2008).

After the dialogue, a memorandum was submitted to the Panchayati Raj Minister of the Government of Rajasthan and the Government of India and to the Governor of Rajasthan demanding 10% of the State budget be allocated to the PRIs (*Annual Report*, 2006-07: 8-9). Astha continued lobbying the government agencies. It organized a State-level workshop on panchayati raj during 29-30 December 2006 and also met with the President of the State [Rajasthan] Finance Commission, who agreed to increase it to 2.25% for the year 2007 (*ibid*). In the recent budget, Rajasthan government has allocated an untied fund of 3.5% of state revenue and 1% of mining royalty for local self governance as a part of its effort to provide financial autonomy to the PRIs.[30]

5.3.2: *Women Development*

The lack of education and information, the social structure manifested through feudalism and systems of marriage, and labour and property have been responsible for the exclusion of (tribal) women from the political and public sphere as well as for their lower status in society (Mosse, 2005a: 57; Unnithan-Kumar, 1997: 21). For example, Unnithan-Kumar (1997) in her study of Garasia women and Mosse (2005a) in his study of Bhil women in Rajasthan have argued that women's identity, their status and access to property are not independent but are usually derived from men's. According to them, women enjoy

[30] Interview with Ashwani Paliwal on 12 June 2008.

weaker position compared to men in the community, both with regard to the decision-making process surrounding marriage and bride price (*dej*), and matters of property.

In fact, Mosse (2005a: 57) goes to the extent to declare that in a Bhil society, "women *are* rather than *have* property". They are the economic assets of the male lineage, who are bought through marriage and bride price to work on men's land (*ibid*.). He further notes that even when the husband of the woman dies, she still "remains 'property' of the lineage and would, as a matter of preference (though not strict obligation), marry the husband's younger brother. If she leaves to live with another man, her husband's kin will come to demand compensation" (*ibid.*). Women were, thus, the vehicles through which male power and authority, both in the family and in the community, were strengthened (Unnithan-Kumar, 1997: 21). Such a patriarchal structure and system of marriage have not only denied the tribal women the power and agency but also subordinated their identity in society.

Considering this, Astha along with three of its people's organizations such as the Tribal Women's Awareness Society, the Rajsamand Women's Forum, and the Association of Strong Women Alone have exclusively taken up issues that affect the lives of (tribal) women in Rajasthan. These organizations are working to develop tribal women's leadership; increase their participation in local government; encourage girl's education; campaign against child marriage, multiple wives and excessive liquor consumption; check violence and atrocities against women; support widows, elderly, separated and single women; and so on (see Nussbaum, 2000: xviii).[31] They have also

[31] According to the Census (2001), 8% of the total female population are widows, while 1.5% women in the age group of 15 years or above are either separated, abandoned, thrown out of their homes or have walked out of marriage. Thus, in toto, about 10% of Indian women are "alone" (http://www.boloji.com/wfs5/wfs870.htm; accessed on 2 September 2008).

organized rallies and campaigns against female foeticide, child marriage, dowry deaths, *purdah* system, and the practice of *sati*. They have spread political awareness among the village and panchayat level functionaries and mobilized women to participate actively in their several people's movements.

According to data, the Rajasthan Women's Forum has stopped 8 child marriages in 2006-07 and the Association of Strong Women Alone has supported 2 widow re-marriages in Udaipur. (*Annual Report*, 2006-07: 63, 81). Following the demands of the Association of Strong Women Alone, the Rajasthan State government has increased the widow pension from Rs. 250 to Rs. 400 in 2007 and also supported the widow remarriage by agreeing to give Rs.15,000 cash incentives to the widow during the marriage (*ibid.*: 81). Astha also acted actively when three female fetuses were found floating in Fateh Sagar Lake in Udaipur on 2 August 2006.[32]

In India, women's participation in public governance used to be only 4% but after the enactment of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment, it has increased to more than 40%.[33] Astha has been training the elected women representatives in the knowledge and skills necessary for local governance. It is considered a leading organization under the national programme of the Aagaz Academy[34], which works towards the "strengthening of women's leadership in India", and has organized 11 training sessions for the elected women representatives under it (*Annual Report*, 2006-07: 6).

Astha has also conducted training for women representatives in Udaipur, Dungarpur, Rajsamand, and Sirohi and has provided "condensed residential literacy

[32] See "Act Fast against Doctors Charged with Female Foeticide, Govt. told", *The Hindu*, 10 August 2006; see also "Aborted Foetus", *The Telegraph*, 6 September, 2006.
[33] See http://aagazfoundation.org/story.asp?sid=79&clicked=6, accessed 26 August 2008.
[34] Aagaz Academy is a part of the Aagaz Foundation, which is an initiative of the Hunger Project in India. The foundation was set up to work towards strengthening of elected women's leadership in India

courses" to the women's group leaders and elected representatives. It has also identified some young people in the locality to continue educating these women. As a result of this, 1452 women's group leaders and elected women representatives have become functionally literate in south Rajasthan, who are now able to write petitions, keep accounts of the credit society, help women to open bank accounts, understand the daily wage records or muster-rolls and so on (*Annual Report*, 2006-07: 10). In fact, an official at the Kotra block office reported that more petitions for government project sanction had been submitted to the block office in the first two years of Astha's work than had been submitted in total since independence.[35]

Astha also organizes exposure trips for the women leaders which help them in sharing and learning different experiences. Along with other organizations, it has demanded the larger representation of women in panchayats. Following such demands to strengthen panchayats, the Chief Minister of Rajasthan Vasundhara Raje has announced an increase in the quota for women in village panchayats from 33% to 50% while presenting the state Budget for 2008-09 (*The Hindu*, 29 February 2008).

5.3.3: *Livelihood Development*

The policies of liberalization, privatization and globalization has resulted not just in acquisition of tribal land for industrialization (discussed later) but also in declining state expenditure on social welfare and development, which has precariously affected the lives of the poor tribals. An analysis of Rajasthan State budget shows that development expenditure has gone down from 58.28% in 1995-96 to 35.15% in 1996-97 and has reached up to 38.61% in 1997-98 (Ahmad and Shrivastava, 2001: 32).

[35] Discussion with an official at Kotra Block Office on 7 December 2006.

A three year comparative study conducted by Astha in 2001 in 10 districts of Rajasthan shows that rising food prices, weakening of the public distribution system (PDS) and the declining government expenditure on agricultural subsidies has adversely affected the income of the small and marginal farmers and increased poverty during the reform period (Ahmad and Shrivastava, 2001: 5, 9). Commercialization of banking, closure of rural branches and changing policies on small-scale loans have resulted in increasing indebtedness and poverty in the tribal society (*ibid.*: 11). An analysis of the State budget during the period of study also shows that the government's allocation of funding for social welfare, nutrition and relief on account on natural calamities are irregular; and that funding for adult education, rural health, water supply and sanitation, agriculture, and rural employment has been declining over the years (*ibid.*: 32-34).

To increase tribal population's control over livelihood resources and opportunities, Astha has been working on issues of food security, PDS, special economic zone, tribal forest-land rights, NREGA, migration and minimum wage, capacity building, skill development and several others. It has organized skill up-grading training in carpentry, wielding, masonry, and hotel services for the migrant labourers; launched campaigns for the survival and dignity of the tribal people; worked with POs for alternative sources of livelihood and water conservation; and arranged dialogues with the elected people's representatives on issues of livelihood for tribal people.

In the late 1980s, Astha had fought against the government's decision to create a game sanctuary, which would displace the tribal population from their homes and prevent them from collecting minor forest produce from the protected forests. It has also been sensitizing people about their constitutional rights and the various government welfare

programmes and has been helping them, since 1995, in their struggle, known as *Jungle Jamin Jan Andolan* (Forest Land Peoples' Movement – FLPM), to regularize the forest land. As a result of this struggle in Rajasthan and several other States, the Government of India has recently enacted the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act in December 2006 which now provides legal land rights to the tribals and also protects their livelihood (see below).

The NREGA was passed by the United Progressive Alliance government in September 2005 and implemented on 2nd February 2006 to provide 100 days of employment to the rural poor in 200 districts in 20 States of India.[36] In Rajasthan, it was implemented in 6 districts such as Banswara, Dungarpur, Udaipur, Sirohi, Karauli and Jhalwar. Following this implementation of government's NREGA programme, Astha, along with its local POs and other NGOs, campaigned and organized mass level awareness foot-march (*padyatra*) in these districts.

Data shows that the *Adivasi Vikash Manch* held mass level meetings in 21 villages of 7 panchayats to discuss about NREGA and forest rights bills in 2006-07 (*Annual Report*, 2006-07: 51). The foot-march continued with the beating of large drums (*Dol*), songs, dances, puppets, banners, and slogans to make people aware about the rules, regulations and procedures of this Act and people's right to get work (Sivakumar, 2006).[37] Armed with mikes, muster rolls, and social audit formats, the teams visited the panchayat head quarters and NREGA work sites. They checked the records and discussed with the workers and villagers about the implementation of the NREGA work. They spent nights at the village schools and ate with the local families.

[36] "Social Audit on Implementation of Job Scheme", *The Hindu*, 24 April 2006.
[37] In February 2007, I foot-marched with the Astha team to several villages in Kotra block and observed the whole process of how they conducted social audit.

With the help of its peoples' organization, the *Adivasi Vikash Manch*, Astha visited 168 villages in 31 panchayats in Udaipur and found out that job cards were not ready; the prevalence of fake attendance; few people found to be working in the area than the figure on muster rolls; wages not being given on time; inadequate payment; and so on (*Annual Report*, 2006-07: 45-46). The findings were shared in a public hearing (*Jan Sunwai*) where the villagers and workers were asked to narrate the problems, difficulties and misappropriations in NREGA programme before the visiting high-ranking bureaucrats.[38] Astha thus conducted social audit, exposed the corruption and irregularities in the programme and presented the findings before the administration.

As a result, Rajasthan has done well ahead of other states in terms of number of people registered, number of person-days created, and number of job cards provided. For example, as against the target of 100 person-days, Rajasthan was able to provide 77 days while some developed and prosperous states like West Bengal and Kerala could only create less than 5 days of employment (Menon, 2008: 7; see Table 5.2).

Besides this, Rajasthan has also performed well in terms of providing employment to the marginalized sections especially the SCs, STs, and the women population. The share of women in employment is approximately two-third in the State; and 80% of SC/ST population has received employment, which has substantially improved their standard of living *(ibid.*).

[38] I attended the public hearing (*Jan Sunwai*) in Nayawas panchayat on 18 February 2007 where people complained about the irregularities and misappropriations in the NREGA work.

Table 5.2: Performance of NREGA across States 2006-2007

State	Person-Days created/household	Share of Women (%)	Share of Wages in total Expenditure (%)
Rajasthan	**77**	**67**	**73**
Assam	70	32	65
Madhya Pradesh	56	43	63
Northeast	45	49	63
Chhattisgarh	34	40	65
Orissa	21	36	58
Himachal Pradesh	20	12	52
Uttarakhand	20	30	61
Karnataka	17	51	60
Jharkhand	14	28	58
Jammu & Kashmir	13	4	65
Uttar Pradesh	11	17	59
Andhra Pradesh	10	55	86
Haryana	9	31	65
Tamil Nadu	9	81	96
Bihar	8	17	59
Gujarat	7	50	65
Punjab	7	38	59
West Bengal	6	18	78
Maharashtra	4	37	95
Kerala	3	66	89
All India	**17**	**40**	**66**

Source: (Menon, 2008: 7)

It is thus clear that the spread of mass awareness campaigns, the right to information, muster-roll verification, and periodic social audit by Astha and other NGOs and POs such as the MKSS have resulted in the widely regarded successful implementation of the NREGA programme in Rajasthan as compared to other States in India (Sivakumar, 2006; Jha, Gaiha and Shankar, 2008).[39] As Jean Dreze points out:

> It is not surprising to find that Rajasthan was the best performer among all major states in terms of employment generation per rural household. Indeed employment guarantee has been a lively political issue in Rajasthan for quite a few years now, and the state also had a high level of preparedness for the Act, having organized massive public works programmes almost every year in living memory (cited in Menon, 2008: 6).

[39] Informal interaction with an auditing officer to the public hearing at Nayawas Panchayat on 18 Feb. 2007

5.4: Relationship with the State and Political Society

Astha's relationship with the institutions of state and political society can only be understood in the context of its separation from Seva Mandir. It has since then followed the "claim making" approach, which has involved a "critical" relationship with the state.[40] It believed that the state has the primary and paramount task of reaching and serving the nation (Astha Sansthan, n.d.: 17). As Scokpol (1985: 6, 28) has argued, states are "society-shaping institutional structures" that have been important for two basic reasons: (1) autonomy and its capacity to realize policy goals through state resources, and (2) influence on the meaning and methods of politics in society.

Astha has thus mobilized the marginalized groups to critically engage with the state and political society for their citizenship rights and welfare entitlements. The state is also seen as the proper arena for resolving political conflict. Hence, the political education or conscientization programmes of Astha are directed towards knowledge of the state – its functions, laws and policies (Kamat, 2002: 158). "The main function of its educational programmes is to convince the *adivasis* that the state's role is to guarantee equal protection under the law and equal right to all its citizens, and that these guarantees needed to be understood and used effectively to secure their rights" (*ibid.*).

Astha has also confronted the institutions of state because most of the issues it addresses originate from policy or political decisions – for example, establishment of cement factory and eviction of forest dwellers in Sanmaria and Kolia, proposal to build

[40] Houtzager and Gurza Lavalle define citizen and state relationship in four ways: (1) *direct* approach to government, (2) *brokered* through parties or patrons, (3) *contentious* relationship expressed through demonstration and petitioning, and (4) *detached* approach expressed in problem solving through collective self help. Although Astha's relationship is often contentious, it also mobilizes people to directly deal with the government and also it often acts as a broker between the state and the citizens. Astha's role defies such strict categorization (cited in Harriss, 2006: 452).

game sanctuary near Mahad, Mansi Wakal dam project in Jhadol, *Jungle Jamin Jan Andolan* in south Rajasthan, and several others (as discussed below). It has recently started working on the government's policies on the special economic zones and bio-fuel tree (*Ratanjote*) plantation, which aim to displace the tribals from their land.

More generally, Astha has mobilized the marginalized to struggle for their interests, citizenship rights and welfare entitlements. Besides the legal procedures and constitutional means, it has often staged peaceful and non-violent protests, rallies, hunger strikes in front of the government offices to pressurize it to become more responsive to the interests and rights of the poor.

Astha also has raised its voice against corruption and unaccountability in public offices at the local level and has organized the poor and marginalized to struggle against local oppressive forces. This has obstructed the interests of corrupt bureaucrats and political representatives in the locality. Astha's open involvement in struggle, protest, mobilization and advocacy work has often made it unpopular among the local government officials (Kuhn, 1998: 160).

The Kotra BDO, referring to Astha and similar other movement-oriented NGOs, asserted that these NGOs are doing nothing but provoking ordinary people to protest against the government and are responsible for the deteriorating socio-economic conditions of the tribal people. However, he acknowledged that some of the NGOs are doing some "good" development work, implicitly referring to those (i.e. Seva Mandir) which are involved in welfare and service delivery activities and did not pose any threat to the local government institutions.[41]

[41] *Sarkar Ke Khilap Logon Ko Bhadkate Hai. Sansthain Adivasiyon Ko Double Adivasi Banadiye Hein.* Interview with Kotra BDO on 29 January 2007.

Similarly, the *Pradhan*, who is the BJP elected chairperson of the Kotra Block Council, complained that Astha is very agitational (*Andolanatmak*).[42] His remarks could be regarded as an "ideological response" to Astha's opposition to the Hindu nationalist organizations like the RSS, the BJP and the RVKP. In addition to this, Astha's involvement in protest and struggle is perceived as threatening to the local government officials and political authorities. Responding to such sentiments, Ashwani Paliwal declares that "we [people of Astha] are not working against the government; rather we are working to strengthen the power of the state/government system (*sarkari byabastha*) to make the democratic values reach the common people. It [our role] is however mistaken by those who do not work or those who are corrupt in the system".[43]

Astha also claims that several of the state officials and political leaders have realized that its work is neither anti-governmental nor wrong; what it is doing is working for the empowerment of the tribal population and effective implementation of the rule of law and government developmental programmes such as the 73rd amendment and PESA Act.[44] It has taken up "limited number of selected projects with the government" and has worked with it on conscientization, mobilization and capacity building projects (*Annual Report*, 2006-07: 3).

According to Ginny Shrivastava, a founding member of Astha, "…we don't take up the government development project, if doesn't involve mobilizing".[45] Ashwani Paliwal notes that 30% of Astha's funding comes from the government sources and the rest 70% comes from the various foreign donor agencies, most important among them are

[42] Discussion with the *Pradhan* of Kotra *Panchayat Samiti* on 6 December 2006.
[43] Interview with Ashwani Paliwal on 16 January 2007.
[44] *Ibid*.
[45] Interview with Ginny Shrivastava on 21 February 2006.

the EED (Germany), Hivos and Oxfam-Novib (The Netherlands), The Hunger Project (USA), Danish Church Aid, Christian Aid (Delhi), UNDP, and several others.[46]

According to Jenkins (2001: 259), many of the international aid agencies prefer to fund organizations that wish to promote (apolitical) "governance" rather than radical "politics". For example, the USAID excludes politicized groups from its definition of civil society where as the UNDP includes politicized movement groups in its definition of civil society (*ibid.*). The approach of the UNDP has thus not restricted the movement character of Astha and funded it to work on "Social Mobilization through Natural Resource Management" in Rajasthan. The other donors have also supported Astha's approach and funded it for right based mobilization, food security, awareness and capacity building, ecological development, and so on.

Astha's work is not restricted to confronting the state and its local institutions. It has also maintained cooperative relationship with the state and organized trainings for the government officials to improve their capacity and knowledge. For example, as a part of the Government of Rajasthan's Social Inputs in Area Development, it has trained the organizers of the women's awareness camps of the Safe Water and Community Health programme; and trained the district level officers on literacy mission in Bihar. It conducted trainings on guinea worm eradication, organized contact teams for guinea worm campaign and eradication and also evaluated the DWCRA work in Pali, Banswara, Bhilwara, and Alwar districts of Rajasthan (Astha Sansthan, n.d.: 17). It has also trained government functionaries like the *Gram Sevikas,* and *Mukhya Sevikas,* and also the BDOs and district level officers (*ibid*.).

[46] Interview with Ashwani Paliwal on 12 June 2008. Over the years, Astha has increased its budget from approximately Rs. 2 million in 1990 to Rs. 7 million in 1995 (Kuhn, 1998: 161) and now to Rs. 30 million in 2006-07 (*Annual Report*, 2006-07: 103).

Recently, Astha has worked with CAPART to mobilize people for land leveling and watershed development. Astha's POs, especially the Rajsamand Women's Forum, has received funding from the Rajasthan Health Department to run a Family Counseling Centre; and the *Adivasi Vikash Manch,* has received support from the government to run a Migrant Labourer's Registration Centre on the border of Gujarat because most of the tribals from southern Rajasthan migrate to Gujarat in search of employment and are often harassed by the police and contractors (*Annual Report*, 2006-07: 39).[47]

In collaboration with the Government of Rajasthan Directorate of Women and Children Development it has trained the Assistant Project Officers and the women's group leaders of the DWCRA groups. It also organized a workshop on female foeticide at the district commissioner's office in Udaipur and submitted the report to the government. Astha has organized trainings for the District Adult Education Officers in Rajasthan and its literacy campaign video tapes were also shown in the national television.

Astha has worked with the government in the capacity building of the Members of Legislative Assemblies. Astha's Budget Analysis and Research Centre (BARC) has been analyzing and providing feedback to the government about the implications of state budget on the marginalized sections of society. On 26 September 2006, it organized a budget orientation meeting, which was attended by fourteen legislators, including the Home Minister, the Speaker of the Assembly and the leader of the Opposition (*Annual Report*, 2006-07: 24-25). Astha has worked for the Ministry of Rural Development and Government of Rajasthan to evaluate the newly implemented NREGA projects. With the

[47] Data show that southern Rajasthan's six districts alone account for 600,000 seasonal migrants. In Kotra, entire families migrate to work in northern Gujarat. Over 100,000 children from Udaipur, Banswara and Dungarpur work 12 hours a day, for three months a year, in Gujarat's Bt. cotton seed farms in Sabarkantha and Banaskanta, across the border. Although there is no data on the extent of migration, some estimates suggest the number of migrant population in India is around 100 million (Karunakaran, 2008).

help of the district administration and the Employment and Right to Information Campaign, it has organized social audits in south Rajasthan. It has also helped in the campaign for universal education (*Sarva Shiksha Aviyan*) and national health programme.

It is thus clear from the above discussion that Astha has maintained a critical (both collaboration and confrontation) relationship with the institutions and officials of the state and government. It has collaborated with the state in its various mobilizational and capacity building programmes. It has mobilized people at the grassroots on several issues, spread political consciousness among them and trained the people's representatives at the panchayat level, government officials like *Gram Sevikas, Mukhya Sevikas,* BDOs, Members of Legislative Assembly, and state officials.

Most of Astha's collaborations with the government have largely involved rights based mobilization, conscientization, voter education, training and capacity building. Such collaborations has not prevented Astha from confronting the state at the local and national level on various issues affecting the lives of the poor and marginalized tribal population, which often made it unpopular among the government officials, politicians and local bureaucrats. Although its efforts are often opposed by the government officials at the local level, such issue/right based struggles (i.e. minimum wage, forest land, and cement factory) have been successful in persuading the government to become more responsive to the interests, rights and entitlements of the marginalized people.

5.5: Astha and Case Studies of "Claim Making"

This section will discuss some cases of claim making in south Rajasthan. These cases will show how Astha and its people's organizations mobilize the tribal population in

presenting their claims before the concerned authorities and institutions. They also show how Astha has followed not just the legal and constitutional means but also other means such as protests, rallies, and strikes to put forward people's interests and to bring structural transformations in the tribal society.

5.5.1: *Confronting Capital*

Forests and hills constitute the natural habitat of the tribal people in India. In fact, it is one of the reasons why the tribals are known as the *vanvasis* or forest dwellers (see Chapter 6). Their livelihood depends on water, forest, and land. These tribal regions of India have high stock of mineral resources. Following the liberalization of Indian economy in 1991, the National Mineral Policy was passed in 1993 to open up the mining sector for public and private investment. This was supplemented by the policies of the Ministry of Environment and Forests. As a result, both private and public companies with national and international bases came to establish their factories and to exploit natural resources in different parts of India. The state, whose prime duty is the welfare and protection of its citizens, utilized its sovereign powers instead, to acquire tribal land on behalf of the multi-national companies (see Sahoo, 2005).

In Rajasthan, such policies began with the coming of Ranakpur Cement, a branch of Kerawali Cement of Andhra Pradesh, which wanted to put up a cement factory on the land of two villages – Sanmaria and Kolia – in the Kotra block of Udaipur district.[48] The factory aimed to acquire 292 *bighas* of prime agricultural land; most supporting 3 crops a year, and threatened to displace 269 families. The Government of Rajasthan helped Ranakpur Cement in the land acquisition process.

[48] This case study is reproduced from Sahoo (2008: 138). See also Astha Sansthan (n.d: 32-33).

However, Astha found out that the fertile tribal land had been declared wasteland in the records. This process of land acquisition threatened not just the livelihood sources of the tribals but also their cultural identity and collective conscience that are associated with a "sense of place" (Sahoo, 2007a: 395). As Harriss (2007: 2721) has argued, "living spaces…are the critical sites of poor, informal working class people's political struggles, rather than work places…and these struggles are directed against the state, not against employers". The threat of displacement and loss of identity thus mobilized the tribals to resist the establishment of the cement factory in their region. As Kamat (2002: 157) notes, "the formation of collective identity depends upon consensus about collective interests and the creation of social practices that represent their collective interests".

Astha mobilized the local tribal people to form a Cement Factory Struggle Committee and to prevent the factory owners and government officials from stepping on the land to take samples or to measure the land. It also provided legal and administrative support to the people and helped with linkages with Courts and lawyers in support of their fight to stay on their land. When notices under the Land Acquisition Act were sent to the people, Astha helped them to reply in writing to the Sub-Divisional Officer (SDO) of Jhadol and Kotra that they did not want their land to be acquired.

At the site of the land, the tribal people would "sound the drum" (*Dol Bajana*), if anyone unknown came onto the land. They gathered in large numbers with traditional weapons like bows and arrows. Landowners objected to the acquisition of their land and suggested an alternative site for cement factory. They filed a stay order in the Rajasthan High Court on the basis of "Right to Life" and demanded expensive compensation claims. The Court issued a stay order on the project; and due to the petitions of the

people, the Rajasthan Department of Environment and Forests did not grant an environmental clearance certificate to Ranakpur Cement. This active mobilization and the struggle of the people stopped the establishment of the cement factory by the end of 1994 and prevented the displacement of tribal people in south Rajasthan.

5.5.2: *Taking the "Sahukars" to the Court*

Writing about "Why Civilizations Can't Climb Hills", James C. Scott (2008) distinguish between the people of the hill (tribes) and the valley. To him, the valley has always been the sites of the state – of taxes, of Kings, of war and of hierarchy; whereas the hill has no permanent states and no taxation system. It is relatively egalitarian, although considered uncivilized, primitive and the barbarian peripheral. He further points out that the mountains remain at the "fringes" of civilization and people run away from valleys to evade "state-making" (*ibid.*). But the modern state, in its different forms, tries to integrate these tribal "non-state fringes" with the valley as a part of its administrative and economic project (Scott, 1998). As Mosse (2005a: 50) has shown, the rule of the Bhil tribes (*Bhil Raj*) in the western Indian hilly and forested regions in the 19th century was marked by "[e]conomic redistribution rather than systems of taxation... and power was decentralized or dispersed through out the *jati* (caste/tribe)…".

But, the British colonial state in India declared the Bhils as "criminal tribes".[49] It required "the control and disciplining of the lawless Bhils" (Mosse, 2005a: 50). In order to make them a part of the "state-making", the British rule opened schools for them,

[49] In order to consolidate their hold over the Indian country side, the British Government of India "notified" certain tribes as "criminals" and passed the notorious Criminal Tribes Act of 1871. This gave colonial administrators sweeping powers to declare certain "tribes, gangs, or classes" as *addicted to the systematic commission of non-bailable offences*. But, after Independence, the government, realizing that the Criminal Tribes Act was a shameful colonial legacy, repealed the Act and officially "denotified" the stigmatized tribes in 1952 (http://keywords.oxus.net/archives/2005/01/07/dnt/; accessed 16 October 2008).

allocated them lands and encouraged their involvement in settled agriculture (*ibid.*). With settled agriculture Bhil communities became dependent on *Sahukars* or traders and moneylenders for credit. The *Sahukars* also acted as the tax-collectors for the state system; and as a result, the relationship between the Bhils and the *Sahukars* gradually turned hierarchical and exploitative (*ibid.*).

Despite this, as Hardiman (1987) points out, "*Sahukars* maintained hegemony through economic compulsion and paternalism rather than coercion. While clearly exploited, Bhils were not bitter towards *Sahukars* as a class; the relationship with their *Sahukar* was valuable asset, it was necessary and 'natural'".

In Rajasthan, such exploitation of the tribals by *Sahukars* has increased over time. For example, due to extreme drought in 1973-74 and lack of employment opportunities, many of the poor tribal families had mortgaged their silver and gold jewellery to moneylenders as collateral for loans for daily expenses, marriages, children's sickness, police bribes, and so on. When the people wanted to recover their jewellery in the late 1980s, the moneylenders, calculating the high rate of interest, demanded an amount many times higher than the actual loan and were also unwilling to return the jewellery.

Such incidences were reported to Astha activists who then surveyed the details about the amount of loan, kinds of jewellery, weight of jewellery, purpose of loan, name of moneylender, rate of interest, and so on. Astha compiled a list of 1000 families in Kotra block and discovered that there were 35 moneylenders/shopkeepers in two towns of northern-Gujarat, two towns of Sirohi district and the rest in and around Kotra.

The data revealed that the tribals had mortgaged 350 KG of silver worth Rs. 2,940,000 (at 1990 prices) for a total loan of Rs. 12,000; and 5 KG of gold worth Rs.

2,400,000 for a total loan of Rs. 5,000 (Astha Sansthan, n.d.) Astha followed the Money Lender Act which directs that all moneylenders need to be registered and should provide a receipt when they take jewellery as collateral. The Act also mentions that the interest rate should be 9% if collateral given and if not it should not be more than 12%. Astha's survey revealed that none of the moneylenders, except one, were registered and no receipt was provided to people (*ibid.*).

Astha called a meeting and shared the information with the people and also accompanied people to the moneylenders to help with the calculation. But the moneylenders demanded 72% cumulative interest on the loan. Astha then mobilized people to file criminal cases in the police station under "cheating" sections of Indian Penal Code (405, 406, 420, and 421) but nothing significant happened (Astha Sansthan, n.d.). The people then went directly to the District Magistrate's Court and filed 80 cases. The Magistrate directed the police department to take quick action; the moneylenders were asked to come to the police station. They negotiated and brought down the interest rate to 48% but the people did not agree. The SDO and the inspectors of moneylenders also interrogated the *Sahukars* and asked for licenses and receipts (*ibid.*).

Due to pressure from all sides, the moneylenders agreed to negotiate[50] and a committee was formed comprising of few representatives of borrowers, Astha, the police station house officer, the block deputy revenue officer, the Kotra *Sarapanch* and the moneylenders. As a result, 800 cases were settled and jewelleries were recovered. This struggle to recover the jewellery in Kotra region thus provided large-scale legitimacy to the functioning of Astha and its people's organizations during the 1990s.

[50] The following formula was agreed upon: Loan of 1-4 years – 24% (not compound) interest; Loan of 5-9 years – 2 times the loan amount; Loan of 10-14 years – 3 times the loan amount; Loan of 15-20 years – 4 times the loan amount (Astha Sansthan, n.d.).

5.5.3: *Struggle against the State: Regularizing the Forest Land*

Since 1995, Astha has been involved in the Forest Land People's Movement to stop tribal displacement and to ensure their rights to land and livelihood. Astha's struggle for forest land is different from Seva Mandir's "decolonization" of the common land project[51] in the sense that while Seva Mandir advocates for collective ownership of land (see Chapter 4), Astha campaigns for the individualized regularization of forest land to those tribals who have been living there for generations. Seva Mandir claims that it is in fact not the poor tribal families but the upper caste and powerful tribal families in the village who have encroached upon the forest land; and hence needed to be freed for the collective community interest. However, R.D. Vyas, a founding member of Astha and in-charge of people's struggles, declares that:

> …we don't deny it; there are some from the upper sections, who have encroached upon the forest land. But the law mentions that it will regularize 18 *bighas* of land. The right has been given to the *Gram Sabha* and the *Gram Sabha* should decide that those who don't have land should be given the right first. The people from upper sections [of tribals], who Seva Mandir alleges to have encroached upon forest land, may have a well or doing agriculture but are not that high in living and economic status. The poor should be given access to the land and forest with prime importance.[52]

The current problem of forest land was a result of "the colonial and authoritarian nature of the Indian Forest Act –1927, together with the failure of the Forest Department to implement the relevant laws and regulations, especially those pertaining to the regularization of land" (Ramin, 2007: 10). Following the Central Government's circular on 18 September 1990, the Rajasthan government had issued notifications to regularize

[51] Seva Mandir believes that common properties of the village, especially land and forest, are encroached by the upper caste and powerful tribal families. In order to make free and ensure collective ownership of village common property resources, Seva Mandir started a project called "decolonizing the commons".
[52] Interview with R.D. Vyas on 15 January 2007.

the forest land in people's possession prior to 1 July 1980 (*ibid*.: 91). Despite this, not much had been done to implement the order. Rather, the Forest Department collected bribes from the tribals; and if they refused, they were harassed and threatened with displacement. This arbitrary action for removal of encroachments and other atrocities by corrupt forest officers continued since activists had remained virtually unaware about the policy. As Ginny Shrivastava pointed out:

> It's true that tribals have been living in this region, but after independence the Forest Department comes up with a map and tells that this is a reserved forest and this is a protected forest and this is a game sanctuary, then those who have been living there for generations suddenly become encroachers. They don't have proper land title; they have already been pushed to the hilly side. Plain land belonged to the upper castes. We worked out on the issue and found out the 1980 cut-off date, which declares that those who have been living there before 1980 could get legal status to their land.[53]

The movement for the forest land formally began in 1995 with the incident that happened in Patilia village in Girwa block, where 34 families were evicted from their homes and beaten by the Forest Department officials for encroaching on forest land (Ramin, 2007: 14). The people of Kadha, Mandwa, and Kotra also mentioned that the *Patwari* (revenue collector) and Forest Department used to collect *bhatta* (bribe) from the people, beat them, harass the females and do not allow people to collect firewood or fruits from the forest.[54] On 19 August 1995, 1000 tribal people living in south Rajasthan's forest areas met in Udaipur and decided to take strong action to fight for their right to land. This meeting resulted in the beginning of the FLPM in south Rajasthan, especially in the districts of Udaipur, Dungarpur, Banswara, Chittor, and Sirohi. As R.D. Vyas noted:

[53] Interview on 21 February 2007.
[54] Discussion with the people of Kadha, Mandwa, and Kotra on 6 June 2008.

> The government order mentioned that if a tribal has been living in the forest prior to 1980 and has built a house and a well, their land will be regularized. There was a committee but nothing had happened. So, we took up the issue and organized a meeting of the NGOs and people who work on tribal issues. We organized meetings and mobilized people, and this movement thus became known as *Jungle, Jamin Jan Andolan*.[55]

Astha, along with several other NGOs, took the leadership of the movement.[56] They met and lobbied with the Chief Minister, Chief Secretary, Environment Minister, Tribal Minister, Members of Parliament and Legislative Assembly of the affected areas. They launched the first campaign rally on 6 October 1995 in Udaipur, where approximately 2000 affected tribals gathered (Ramin, 2007: 14). It subsequently organized several rallies and sit-ins in the block and district level which turned it into a political issue in south Rajasthan.[57] The people of Kadha, Mandwa, and Kotra recall that many from their village went to Udaipur and to Kotra to stage protests before the administration.[58]

On 6 February 1996, hundreds of people marched through the streets of Udaipur to present a memorandum to the Tribal Commissioner demanding the regularization of tribal homesteads on forest land before 1980 (Ramin, 2007: 15). After long negotiation, the Commissioner issued a letter noting that no displacement could take place until the process was completed. Astha made copies of the letter and distributed them among the affected forest dwellers. When the forest guards tried to take a bribe or harass, the people showed them the commissioner's letter.[59] In the survey of people with eligible

[55] Interview, 15 January 2007.
[56] Some of the other NGOs are Jagaran Jan Vikash Samiti (Udaipur), Ankur Sansthan (Jhadol), Rajasthan Adivasi Sangh (Dungarpur), Sadachar Sansthan (Kedaria), Mahan Seva Sansthan (Kolyari), and Prayas (Chittorgarh). See http://www.jjvs.org/ganesh.htm; accessed on 6 September 2008.
[57] See appendix for a chronology of events. Some of the slogans uttered by people are: *Jangle Jamin Khate Karo* (Give us the right to forest land); *Jangle Jamin Kiski Hai* (Whose land is it anyways?); *Jangle Jamin Leke Rahenge! Naya Nahin Kherdengay, Purani Nahin Chordengay* (We will take and keep our forest land! We'll not take new land, but we'll not leave our old land); and so on.
[58] Discussion with the people of Kadha, Mandwa and Kotra on 6 June 2008.
[59] Interview with Ginny Shrivastava on 21 February 2007.

possessions, the forest department had sent a list of only 5,395 names to the central government for approval, but the FLPM leaders claimed the list was incomplete and presented a list of 17,608 eligible possessions across several regions in south Rajasthan (*ibid*: 22-24; see Table 5.3).

Table 5.3: Regularization of Pre-1980 Encroachment of Forest Land

District	Forest Department Report			FLPM Report
	Claims Received	Eligible	Ineligible	Eligible
Chittorgarh	1,581	868	713	1,899
Dungarpur	1,344	766	578	1,983
Udaipur	2,892	1,350	1,513	10,419
Banswara	3,212	2,298	914	11,060
Rajsamand	43	2	41	891
Sirohi	201	0	201	1,056
Baran	107	107	0	--
Pali	4	4	0	300
Total	9,355	5,395	3,960	17,608

Source: (Ramin, 2007: 22).

Astha played a leading role in the movement by distributing pamphlets, spreading information, organizing rallies, discussing with the prospective political candidates, and lobbying with the government and the bureaucracy. It also lobbied the different political parties (including the BJP, the Congress and the CPI), who pursued the issue in the Parliament and Legislative Assembly.[60] It received support from all the political parties and constantly lobbied with the various governments in power. All the protest and struggle were peaceful and did not violate the rule of law.

Following the struggle of several people's movements from different parts of the country, on 21 December 2004, the Prime Minister chaired a high level committee on the

[60] The BJP MP and several other MPs from Rajasthan pursued the matter in Delhi (Interview with R.D. Vyas on 15 January 2007).

problems of tribal communities and directed the Ministry of Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes to draft a tribal forest land bill (Ramin, 2007: 34). As a result of the 10 year long struggle of the tribal people and organizations in Rajasthan and in other parts of the country, the Government of India, on 13 December 2005, finally passed the Scheduled Tribes (Recognition of Forest Rights) Bill, which set the cut-off date as 1980s.[61]

However, estimates showed that 1.4 million people in Assam, West Bengal, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, and Jharkhand alone will be subject to eviction under 1980 cut-off date (Ramin, 2007: 38). The Bill also provided no rights to poor non-Scheduled Tribe forest dwellers. The struggle continued, the Joint Parliamentary Committee was forced to revise the cut-off date as 13 December 2005 and recognized the rights of non-Scheduled Tribe forest dwellers. On 16 December 2006, the Government of India passed the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, which provides legal protection to lands, lives, livelihoods and traditional rights of the tribal and non-tribal forest dwellers in India.[62]

5.5.4: *Struggle against the State: Stopping the Dam Construction*

Astha along with other organizations like Ankur Sansthan and Jagaran Jan Vikash Samiti was involved in the Mansi Wakal anti-dam movement in Jhadol block of Udaipur district. Mansi Wakal dam was a collaborative project between the Government of Rajasthan and the Hindustan Zinc Limited to build a dam on Mansi and Wakal rivers to meet the long

[61] This 1980 cut-off date of the government noted that only those tribals who have been living in the forest before 1980 would be regularized.

[62] Astha is now helping the government in the implementation of the Act. Along with its POs, it has been forming village committees who will look after the regularization process.

term water needs of Udaipur city. On 11 February 1997, both signed a memorandum to share the cost of this project and available water in the proportion of 70 and 30.[63]

The government of Rajasthan wanted to acquire the tribal agricultural land to build the dam to preserve rain water, but the illiterate tribal people in the area organized themselves against the government's dam project since land constituted not just the major source of their livelihood but also of their culture and identity (see Sahoo, 2007a).

The people of the region formed the Chandeswar Mahadev Peasant's Struggle Association to lead the movement.[64] Since the tribal populations were illiterate and uneducated and were unaware about legal procedures, various NGOs came to join the movement and provided legal and moral support to the movement. The people decided not to give up their land because, for them, displacement is more painful than death.[65] When the government tried to negotiate with the people for compensation and rehabilitation, the people remained firm in their decision not to give up their land, which the struggle committee in retrospect regrets as a mistake.[66] Instead, they suggested the government to construct the dam at Devas, which, according to them, will not displace people from their agricultural land and livelihood sources. But the government remained unmoved in its decision since Mansi Wakal was a viable and sustainable project that could provide drinking water for longer period than any other project.[67]

Following this decision by the government, the people resorted to violence such as beating up construction workers and destroying government properties. The members

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[63] www.planning.rajasthan.gov.in/Tenth%20Plan/Chapter/PDF/chap22-WSS.pdf; accessed, 3 Sept. 2008.
[64] They formed the committee in the name of local god "Shiva" because his temple was getting submerged in the dam project. This also provided the binding force for people to struggle for their collective interest.
[65] Discussion with Dev Kishan Ji, President of the Chandeswar Mahadev Peasant's Struggle Association, Chandwas, Jhadol, on 11 January 2007.
[66] *Ibid*.
[67] Discussion with Abhay Singh Jhalla and Praveen Godania of Ankur Sansthan, Jhadol on 23 Nov. 2006.

of some NGOs such as Ankur Sansthan became personally involved in the movement because they were losing their land in the dam project. But, other NGOs like Astha began to withdraw themselves from the movement as the movement had resorted to violence. This created disagreements, divisions and conflict of interests among the involved NGOs.

In order to suppress the 700 or 800 strong tribal movement, the government deployed 2000 armed policemen in the region who were provided with the order to shot.[68] This created fear among the ordinary people, who also became the victim of government coercion and violence. Such use of violence against the tribals was justified by the state as a "prerequisite to welfare" of the larger society (Li, 2007: 54, 12). Utilizing the section 5 (1) of the FCRA 1976, which gives the government the right to deregister organizations of political nature without being a political party, the government threatened to deregister the NGOs involved in the Mansi Wakal movement for inciting the tribal population against the state.[69] Discussing about Astha's withdrawal from the Mansi Wakal movement, Ashwani Paliwal declared that:

> …when people wanted to break the law, they will. We [NGOs] can't stop them. And at such point, the NGOs have to separate them from the movement because they have to work for long time and different issues, not one. If their existence becomes questionable how will they work? It is thus important to save the NGOs and if people want to break the laws, they will because it's threatening their life and livelihood. NGOs can't break the laws.[70]

The affected people of the region argue that the Mansi Wakal movement failed and lost its direction and strength because of three reasons: first, the people were illiterate and not

[68] Discussion with Dev Kishan Ji on 11 January 2007.
[69] One such example is that the government of Orissa had deregistered four NGOs (i.e. Agragamee, Laxman Nayak Society, Ankuran, and Weaker Sections Integrated Development Agency) and deprived them from state and donor funding for their involvement in anti-industrialization struggle in the tribal regions of Orissa (Sahoo, 2007a: 402).
[70] Interview, 16 January 2007.

equipped with the knowledge of legal procedures; second, the violent response from the state; third and most notably, what Jenkins and Goetz (2003: 136) have called, the "compromised" and "*corrupted nature of civil society*" manifested through the withdrawal of NGOs to protect their own interest.[71]

However, the important reasons for the movement's failure were the conflict of interest between the NGOs involved and the lack of "cohesion" among the protest leaders.[72] They were not able to agree on the amount of compensation claims or on following legal procedures which had brought success during the struggle to stop the construction of the cement factory in Kotra. Instead, they followed a violent approach which, in turn, compelled the state to resort to coercion and force, and ultimately to suppress the movement.

5.6: Conclusion: Growing Citizenship from the Grassroots

It is evident from the above discussion that although Astha and Seva Mandir have the same objective to empower the marginalized sections of society and increase their participation in the development process, they have been very different in their ideology, approach and functioning. The ideological conflict between the two organizations in the late 1980s served as the significant point of departure for Astha. Contrary to Seva Mandir's decision to follow a top-down, project oriented and incentive induced approach to development, Astha followed a more radical approach to rural development and maintained a "critical" relationship with the state. Unlike Seva Mandir, it has recognized

[71] Discussion with Dev Kishan Ji on 11 January 2007.
[72] According to Lipsky (1968: 1968), "cohesion is particularly important when protest leaders bargain directly with target groups".

the state as the prime agency of engagement for claim making, citizenship rights and welfare entitlements.

Besides this, Astha has also emphasized large-scale non-violent mobilization, and issue-based struggle and advocacy as the major means of social transformation in society. It has also spread information and political education among people, which has "emphasized the constitution of active social subjects – the ability to become political agents – as the crucial dimension of citizenship" (Dagnino, 2005: 155). As Naila Kabeer, writing about Nijera Kori's role, a Bangladeshi NGO ideologically similar to Astha, declares:

> By providing the poor and marginalized with knowledge about their rights, and with some degree of security in their dealings with more powerful sections of society it seeks to shape the direction of social change through the purposive collective agency of the poor, rather than leaving it to the "unintended consequences" of market forces or the arbitrary actions of the state (Kabeer, 2005: 196).

Although it is very difficult to draw any simple conclusion about the implications of Astha's role in tribal development, one thing is clear. It has mobilized the marginalized masses to engage directly with the institutions of state for their rights and entitlements. Astha has not only politicized issues through protest, demonstration, networking, lobbying and advocacy but also mobilized them in a rights based approach. The politicization of issues and mobilization of masses on the basis of rights have made the government and the state accountable and responsive the needs and interests of the marginal masses. As a result of such movements, the welfare needs of the people have been recognized by the state as the legitimate rights and entitlements of the people. Astha has thus sown "the seeds of an alternative culture of rights in the consciousness of its

marginalized constituency" and it is because of this, "the rights of the poor may still get trampled but they do not get ignored" (Kabeer, 2005: 184, 197).

The state has always been the central agency of Astha's struggle for citizenship rights and welfare entitlements. However, as shown in the case studies, Astha has not always been successful in its efforts to make the state responsive to its demands. The question one might ask is that why did Astha succeed in some of its movements and failed in others? Of the four case studies discussed above, it is clear that Astha has succeeded in its struggle to stop the construction of cement factory in Kotra, in addressing the exploitative money lending system at the local level, and also in regularizing the forest land for the tribals but has failed to stop the Mansi Wakal dam project in Jhadol block of Udaipur district.

In all the first three movements, Astha has followed the non-violent approach to achieve its objectives. It followed lobbying, advocacy, networking and peaceful protest to influence the decisions of the state institutions and authorities. It also made use of legal institutions like the Courts, District Magistrates, Tribal Commissioners, police, and so on to advance its claims. The leadership of the movement was also firm and unified in their approach. On the whole, Astha played an important mediating role, facilitating not just the mobilization of people but also employing institutional mechanisms in favour of the people. Besides Astha's role, the state was also cooperative. If the state had not acted favourably, it would have been difficult for Astha and the people to achieve the set goal.

However, Astha and the other organizations failed to persuade the state to stop the construction of Mansi Wakal dam in Jhadol region. The state acted repressively and non-responsively, and utilized coercive measures to suppress the people's movement. It

should be noted here that the repressive response of the state was a result of many factors. First, the Mansi Wakal project was very important for the state because it had the capacity to provide clean drinking water to the people of Udaipur for a longer period of time, for which the state was not willing to compromise. Second, the violent approach adopted by the movement compelled the state to use coercive measures to suppress the movement. And, thirdly, the nature of the movement was divided; the NGOs shared conflicting interests for which they could not agree on a unified approach. Thus, the repressive actions by the state and the conflicting interest within the struggle committee eventually weakened the movement and lead to its failure.

The case of Mansi Wakal also shows that not only the bureaucratic-authoritarian states as seen in Eastern Europe and Latin America but also repressive and non-responsive democratic states could undermine the process of democratization (see Muetzelfeldt and Smith, 2002; see also Chapter 2). Similarly, violent civil society groups such as the Mansi Wakal anti-dam struggle committee can also undermine institutional structure and political order in democratic societies (Huntington, 1968).

Contrary to this, as we have seen in the cases of the cement factory struggle, the forest land struggle, and so on, a politicized civil society expressed through a non-violent people's movement is able to elicit a positive response from the state, resulting in beneficial social change and rural development. An unresponsive or repressive state and a depoliticized or violent civil society can adversely affect the democratization process.

6

RAJASTHAN VANVASI KALYAN PARISHAD AND THE CULTURAL POLITICS OF DEVELOPMENT

6.1: Introduction

This chapter examines the role of a Hindu(tva) oriented voluntary organization called the Rajasthan Vanvasi Kalyan Parishad among the tribals in southern Rajasthan.[1] It is argued that the RVKP broadly adheres to the communitarian model of civil society organizations discussed in Chapter 2. Grounded on the idea of community and culture, this model maintains that there is a progressive decline of values due to increasing modernization of society. Thus, there is the exigency of rebuilding the community to regain its civility as well as to strengthen its moral values, virtues and bonds. In turn, this would tie people together to enable them overcome isolation and alienation, and establish "good" and "virtuous" society (Etzioni, 1995: iii-v).

However, what is virtuous for one group may not be for others; and this often fuels communal antagonism, increases intolerance and exclusion, and demonizes "others" as enemies. This demonization institutionalizes political authoritarianism in the name of community where the dominant community or the state imposes a received set of moral values on unwilling subjects (Chua, 2004: 12; Calhoun, 2002: 160; Etzioni, 1995: 13).[2]

[1] Parts of this chapter has been published as "Ethno-Religious Identity and Sectarian Civil Society: A Case from India", *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism,* Vol. 8, No. 3, December 2008, pp. 453-80.

[2] The communitarians have criticized liberalism for failing to understand the "dialogical character" of human life, for considering people as isolated and atomistic individuals, for ignoring the idea of

This chapter also argues that by utilizing development and service delivery projects as an entry point, the RVKP has spread the Hindutva ideology among the tribals of Rajasthan. By capitalizing on the idea of tribal victim-hood and by following a planned process of political socialization, it has successfully presented itself as a counter-force against the non-Hindu "others", especially Muslims and Christians, who are projected as anti-nationalists. Not only the RVKP's cultural and educational institutions but also its developmental programmes have served as agencies of political socialization of the tribal population into Hindutva ideology.

This political socialization and developmental patronage has helped the RVKP not only in strengthening its legitimacy in tribal society but also in gaining support for the BJP in electoral politics. In return, the BJP government in Rajasthan since the 1990s has facilitated sectarian politics by ensuring that the state machinery turns a blind eye to the RVKP's misdemeanors. The RVKP has basically posed a challenge to the liberal democratic values of the Indian Constitution and "saffronized" both the institutions of the state and civil society in Rajasthan.

6.2: Making India Hindu – The "Good" Society of the Sangh

The RVKP considers the RSS as its mother organization and remains fully committed to its ideology as well as its vision of India. Established in 1925 by Dr. K.B. Hedgewar, the RSS is currently the largest volunteer organization in the country with a membership of

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community, and for being "difference-blind" and homogenizing in nature. The communitarians have instead recognized the "group rights" and emphasized on the role of culture and community. They have urged to recognize the "uniqueness" and "distinctness" of identity of the individual or group (the politics of recognition), which according to them, will serve as the foundation for a multi-cultural society (see Taylor, 1994). This however has not always been the case. Some communities rather have exclusively promoted mono-culturalism, which has threatened the foundations of secular democratic societies. Berglund (2004: 176) has referred the former as the multi-communitarian and the latter as the mono-communitarian.

1.3 million (Jayal, 2007: 144).[3] It has drawn most of its ideological inspiration from V.D. Savarkar who later became the president of Hindu *Mahasabha* in 1937. His motto was "Hindu, Hindi, Hindustan" (Jaffrelot, 2005: 1). Considering the amorphousness of Hinduism[4], which hindered the building of a strong political movement, Savarkar, through the ideology of Hindutva, unwaveringly endeavored to establish India as a Hindu nation (Teltumbde, 2006: 247). In his book, *Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?* (1923), Savarkar provided an exclusive, extremely radical, and uncompromising form of nationalism and citizenship, which maintained that India, that is Hindustan or Sindhustan or Saptasindhu, is the land of Hindus and its identity is embodied in Hindu culture and civilization.

According to the Hindutva narrative, the Aryans were the first people to arrive and settle along the seven rivers, which they called the Saptasindhu.[5] While the Vedas are claimed to be the earliest record of religious belief of any Indian community, not all people of Saptasindhu have subscribed to the Vedic religious beliefs. Those who followed the Vaidik or the Sanatan or the Shruti-Smriti-Puranokta Dharma are orthodox Hindus and they constitute the majority of the population.

There were also a set of heterodox religions like the Sikhs, the Jains, and the Buddhists whose forefathers once belonged to the Vaidik religion but at certain point, rejected either partly or wholly, the authority of the Vedas. Savarkar suggested that these religions "would continue to be denoted by their respective and accepted names, Sikha Dharma or Arya Dharma or Jain Dharma or Buddha Dharma" but "[w]henever the

[3] The membership in RSS is much larger than this because, as Deo (2007: 144-5) notes, even in a small state like Orissa, the RSS boasts a reach of over a million members. Deo also notes that the RSS has 49,734 *Shakhas* or branches spread all over India (North–29,611; South–12,171; West–5,336; and East–2,416).
[4] Amorphousness refers to the pluralistic tradition of Hinduism such as Smarta, Shaiva, Vaishnava, Shakta and others, which defies the precise definition of Hinduism as a political identity (Teltumbde, 2006: 259).
[5] For a critical discussion on the Aryan race theory see Thapar (1996: 3-29), and Leopold (1974: 578-603).

necessity of denoting these Dharmas as a whole arises then alone we may be justified in denoting them by the generic term Hindu Dharma or Hinduism" (Savarkar, 1989/2003: 66). He, however, argued that Muslims and Christians can never be a part of Hinduism.

Savarkar identifies three essential characteristics of Hindutva or Hinduness. The first essential qualification of a Hindu is that to him "the land that extends from Sindhu to Sindhu is the Fatherland (*Pitribhu*), the Motherland (*Matribhu*) the land of his patriarchs and forefathers" (Savarkar, 1989/2003: 67). It is the land where the Truth and *Tatvajnana* (philosophy) was revealed to them (*Punyabhu*–holyland). The second characteristic is that a Hindu is a "descendant of Hindu parents, claims to have the blood of the ancient Sindhu and the race that sprang from them in veins". In this view, inhabiting or being born within the territory of Saptasindhu does not automatically qualify one as a Hindu.

The third characteristic of the Hindu is to share a common *sanskriti* or culture. This common culture of the Hindus is expressed chiefly by the common classical language Sanskrit[6] and its main vernacular derivative, Hindi (Savarkar, 1989/2003: 71; Sharma, 2003: 163-4; Jaffrelot, 2005: 1). Thus, for Savarkar, the three essentials of Hindutva are: a common nation (*Rashtra*), a common race (*Jati*), and a common civilization (*Sanskriti*); and a Hindu is he who looks up this land as not only a Pitribhu but a Punyabhu, not only a Fatherland but also a Holyland.

According to this definition, the heterodox or non-Vaidik religions like Sikhism, Jainism, and Buddhism qualify to be considered as a part of the Hindu Dharma. These religions are the offspring of this sacred soil of Saptasindhu and the highest truth of their

[6] According to Glowalkar, the second *Sara Sanghchalak* of RSS, Sanskrit is the language of gods and the queen of languages (see Anderson and Damle, 2005: 29). Duara (1991) has also noted that in the early nineties, newspapers translators and all-India radio employees were ordered to use Sanskrit for certain terms because it was insisted of being a secular language.

religion was revealed to them here. The people of these religions also carry the so called Hindu blood because their forefathers once belonged to the Vaidik Hindu religion. Besides these, they share the common cultural and civilizational conceptions of the land.

In a similar way, the Muslims and Christians in India have carried the blood of the Hindu race because before being forcibly converted into a non-Hindu religion, claims Savarkar, these people belonged to the Hindu religion.[7] They also have inherited a common Fatherland and a greater part of the common culture. Despite possessing all the essential characteristics of Hindutva, the Muslims and the Christians, however, asserts Savarkar, cannot be identified as Hindus because they do not consider India as their Holyland. For them, Arabia or Palestine is the Holyland because it is where their mythology and ideas originated. In this sense, they are foreign to this land and "[t]heir love is divided" (Savarkar, 1989/2003: 69).

Savarkar sees Muslims and Christians as foreign aggressors and "culturally alien" people (*Mlecchas*) who have forcibly converted Hindus into non-Hindu religions (see Hansen, 1999: 11; Jaffrelot, 1996: 2). As a result, the love and loyalty of the converted community has been divided between their Fatherland and their Holyland. These two communities consequently formed the conflicting "non-self" or "the intimate enemy" for Hindutva's homogenizing nation-state project.

For Savarkar, Hindus were the "bedrock on which an Indian independent state could be built" (cited in Sharma, 2003: 156). He declared that "Swarajya (or self-rule) is worthless without Swadharma (or own religion) and Swadharma is powerless without Swarajya" (*ibid*.: 142). He urged the converts to come back to their ancestral religion and

[7] In the colonial period, Christians, who were Indians by race, were also known as "Christians of pure Hindoo blood". In 1931, they comprised 95.1% of the total number of Christians in British India, Anglo-Indians 2.2%, and Europeans 2.7% (Mallampalli, 2004: 6).

demanded the Hindus to "seek retribution (*Pratisodh*) for the wrongs done to them as a nation and as a race" (*ibid*.: 131). As he asserted, "[d]ie for the sake of dharma, and while dying kill all; in killing is your victory, the establishment of your own rule" (*ibid*.: 142). He also asserted that "India must be a Hindu land, reserved for the Hindus" (*ibid*.: 168). The Sangh Parivar has, therefore, followed revenge, retribution, aggression, and fear as legitimate instruments not just to check the activities of their so-called enemies but to establish a nation-state that must always be ready to defend its religion.

6.3: History and Ideology of Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram

The history of the origin of the VKA lies in the idea of dealing with "the intimate enemy" or what Jaffrelot (1996: 26) has described as the "threatening others".[8] There are two general types of "others" who are considered as the potentially "disruptive" forces – first, the Muslims and Christians who are regarded as aggressors and who propagate values that threaten the idea of Hindu *Rashtra*; and second, the "westernized" elite who propose capitalism, socialism, or communism as solutions for Indian development (Anderson and Damle, 2005: 24). The primary enemy that heavily determined the formation the VKA was the missionary nature of Christianity.

Although Christianity arrived in India with the coming of Saint Thomas the Aopstle during the first century, its major growth occurred during the period of British colonialism.[9] Missionaries in India during the colonial period held two beliefs: in Jesus

[8] Savarkar's Hindutva was influenced by Italian nationalist "Mazzini's studies of 'threatening others' to the study of ethnic nationalist movement in Europe". For Mazzini, "the 'threatening other'… consisted of capitalism and France". For Savarkar, it is Islam, Christianity, and communism (Kinnvall, 2006: 93, 190).

[9] According to Dirks (1996: 116), "until the early nineteenth century, missionary activity was significantly curtailed by the East India Company's concern about keeping missionaries from disturbing local sensibilities, but Church pressure in England and the growing legitimation crisis of empire conspired to

and in the Raj (Sinha, 1991: 65).[10] Since the high caste Hindus looked upon the missionaries with suspicion and contempt, the missionaries concentrated upon the tribals and low-caste Hindus who are exterior to and oppressed under Hinduism, and whom they described as people with no religion (see Sinha, 1991; Dirks, 1996).

In the 1950s and 1960s, which marked the height of what Surajit Sinha had called the "tribal solidarity movement", demand for tribal states became powerful; and the blame for this tribal "unrest" and "separatism" was laid mainly on the Christian missions in India (see Chaube, 1999: 524; Jaffrelot, 1996: 322). The spread of Christianity was felt in the tribal dominated central province of Madhya Pradesh during the early years of independence.[11] When the Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister, Pandit Ravisankar Shukla, visited Jashpur Nagar, he was protested with black flag and asked to go back. He came to know that the Christian missionaries have been active there since 1905 and have influenced people to demand a separate state of Jharkhand (*Bappa Rawal,* April 1997: 11-2).[12] He consulted Thakkar Bappa, who was a member of Gokhale's Servant Society of India and had founded the Bhil Seva Mandal in Gujarat in 1871, to look after the affairs of tribal welfare (*The Hindu,* 22 January 2001). Thakkar Bappa suggested him to win the hearts of tribals through service and constructive developmental work.

Following this, Balasaheb Deshpande, a RSS volunteer, came to Jashpur in 1948 to work in the Thakkar Bappa project of the government. After the death of Thakkar

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open India up to Christian proselytization on a significant basis from the mid-1820s on" (see also van der Veer, 1996: 3). Jaffrelot (1996: 14) and Chaube (1999: 525) have noted that it was only after the passing of the Charter Act of 1813 Christian Missions were established in India on a greatly increased scale.

[10] "Among the non-British missionaries there were some who did not work towards establishing native allegiance to the Raj. The colonial government, realizing this, made it obligatory for missionaries coming to India from countries outside the British empire to sign a 'neutrality pledge', in which they had to promise never to interfere in the political matters of the colony" (Sinha, 1991: 65).

[11] There are 300,000 Christians among the Santal tribes of India. Among the Munda and Oraon in Bihar, it is about 25%; and among the Kharia of Bihar, it is about 60% (Heitzman and Worden, 1995).

[12] Some sources note that the Missionary activities began in the region in 1845 (Sahay, 1968: 924-5).

Bappa in 1950, Balasaheb discussed with Sri Guruji, the then RSS *Sarasangh Chalak*, the idea of establishing an independent organization to look after the issue of tribal welfare. With the help of Balasaheb and Jashpur *Maharaja* B.B. Singh Deo, the VKA was established in the form of a hostel consisting of 10 tribal students on 26 December 1952 at Jashpur, Madhya Pradesh to look after tribal welfare and development. However, its most important objective was to stop religious conversion carried out by the Missionaries among the tribes of Madhya Pradesh (Sunder, 2004: 1607; Jaffrelot, 1996: 322).

The VKA remained confined to Jashpur and worked as a regional organization. During the Emergency rule in 1975, most of its volunteers, including Balasaheb, were jailed. After the Emergency in 1977, the demand for separate states grew in the Christian dominated eastern region for which it was suggested by the then RSS *Sarasangh Chalak*, Balasaheb Deoras Ji, to spread the work of the VKA to other parts of India. As a result, several state-level branches of the VKA were opened to stop the conspiracy (*Sadyantra*) of foreign forces, especially the missionaries that aim to divide the country (*Bappa Rawal*, February 1994: 17-8). The VKA is now headquartered in Jashpur and is working in all the States of India. It has been working with 240 tribal communities in 299 tribal districts, and in 53,750 villages through 12,378 programmes (RVKP Booklet, 2006: 1).

As a part of this expansion programme, the RVKP was established in Kotra, Udaipur in the form of a student hostel on 25 August 1978. There could be many reasons for which the RVKP was founded in Kotra: (1) it was/is the most backward region in Rajasthan, (2) almost 90% of the populations are tribals, (3) the tribal people of this region have history of fighting against the foreign forces, including the Mughals and the British, (4) the tribals and Hindus in this region share pride for Maharana Pratap, the ruler

of Mewar who never surrendered to the Mughal invasion, (5) this region is the home to Rana Poonja, a tribal who helped Maharana Pratap during the battle with the Mughals at Haldighati[13], (6) it is the home to Motilal Tejawat, a Jain Baniya who fought against tribal exploitation and also against British rule, and (7) since the time of the British, this region has been a stronghold of the so called "disruptive" forces such as the Muslims and the Christian missionary groups (Anderson and Damle, 2005: 24).[14]

The RVKP now works with six major tribal communities (*Bhil, Mina, Damor, Kathodi, Garasia* and *Sahriya*) spreading across in 3000 villages in 32 administrative blocks in all 10 tribal districts of Rajasthan (RVKP Booklet, 2006: 1-3).[15] Data suggest that the RVKP currently runs 813 developmental projects, 248 *Gram Samitis* (village committees), 7 *Sahri Mahila Samitis* (urban women committees), and 116 *Gramin Mahila Samitis* (rural women committees) in Rajasthan (*Bappa Rawal,* April 2006: 17). The RVKP has utilized these "developmental projects" as well as the rich historical past and "Rajput ethic" of Rajasthan not just to check the activities of the threatening others but also to spread its Hindutva ideology among the tribals and integrate them with the Hindu society (Jenkins, 1998: 104). The spread of Hindutva among the tribals demands a discussion on how the tribals are perceived in India. The next section will discuss the position of the RVKP in defining the tribal identity in India.

[13] The battle of Haldighati was fought on 18 June 1576 between Maharana Pratap of Mewar and the imperial army of emperor Akbar of Delhi. Although the result was indecisive, the Mughal army suffered heavy losses because of the intensive arrow showers by the Bhil tribes led by Poonja, who later received the title "Rana" from Maharana Pratap for his help during the war. This transformed the Bhil identity into Rajput identity (the warrior community to which the king belonged). As a legacy, many tribal groups in Rajasthan today claim to be Rajputs and do not wish to avail the reservation system for tribals.

[14] During a discussion on 26 November 2006, a pastor in Baghpura mentioned that there are more than 15 Christian organizations working among the tribals in Jhadol region of Udaipur district.

[15] They are: Rajsamand, Udaipur, Dungarpur, Banswara, Chittorgarh, Kota, Baran, Jhalwad, Sirohi, & Pali.

6.4: The RVKP and Tribal Identity

There has been no clear and conclusive discussion about the identity of the tribal population of India. As per the 2001 Census, the tribals constitute 8.2% (84.2 million) of India's population; and there are about 689 tribes speaking about 105 languages and 225 subsidiary languages. They have lived in about 15% of nation's geographical area, mainly forests and hills and have been known as *Adim Jati, Adivasi* (original inhabitants), *Jangli Jati, Vanyajati, Vanvasi* (forest dwellers), *Janajati* (tribals), aborigines, indigenous peoples, and recently by the Indian Constitution (Article 366) as scheduled tribes.[16]

Two divergent viewpoints have dominated the anthropological debates on tribes in India. The imperialist position, advocated by Verrier Elwin and Furor Haimondorf, has argued that the tribals are "animists and *not* (or as opposed to) Hindus" because they differ fundamentally from the orthodox Hindu society in their value system, religion and other aspects of culture (Thapar, 1980: vii; Furor Haimondorf, 1980). Their position thus stressed the separateness of tribals from the Hindus. By contrast, the nationalist viewpoint led by N.K.Bose and G.S. Ghurye has noted that the "distinction between 'Hinduism' and 'Animism' was false and misleading" (cited in Thapar, 1980: vii). According to Bose (1949/1996), although the tribal groups existed outside the Hindu social organizations they have been acculturated and absorbed in the lower structures of the Hindu society. Considering their cultural closeness to the Hindu social and religious order, Ghurye (1959) has declared them the "backward Hindus".

[16] The word "tribal" is derived from Latin word "tribes" which refers to a community living in a particular geographical area and is related to a traditional descent. Ghurye (1963: 147) has argued that the term "adivasi" was coined in 1941 by social worker A.V Thakkar. The International Labour Convention 107 held at Geneva on 5 June 1957 classified the tribals as indigenous (see Behura, 1996: 1-16).

The Constitution has listed several communities in the Fifth Schedule as "tribes" for the purpose of affirmative action, mainly in the areas of employment and education.[17] The term is used to designate a whole cluster of diverse "non-Indic" or "semi-Indic" communities who are mostly non-Aryan and remained outside the Hindu caste system. They are understood to be indigenous people of India, who practiced animism and lived on the sub-continent long before the Aryans entered, around 1500 BCE (Menon and Nigam, 2007: 38). However, the tribals in south Rajasthan declare themselves Hindus as they follow Hindu rituals, worship Hindu gods and goddesses, and celebrate Hindu festivals like *Durga Puja, Ganesh Puja, Deepavali,* and so on.[18]

Such celebration of rituals or what is referred to as the "quintessential customs" has served as an all-purpose social glue that has bound the tribals with the Hindu society (Comaroff and Comaroff, 1993: xv). Mann and Mann (1989: 156) have argued that this is primarily because the tribes have been in contact with dominant caste Hindus, who entered the tribal belt not only as rulers but also as trading, priestly and serving castes. The tribes acquired the cultural traits of the caste Hindus as their reference group behaviour with the objective to elevate their position as well as to attain higher social status in their society. Mann and Mann (1989) have called this process of acculturation as "Hinduisation", which, they believe, has had a comparatively longer history among the Western Indian tribes.[19] As a result of such acculturation, "[i]n India…some tribes have

[17] However, as Unnithan-Kumar (1997: 17) has argued, such "administrative classification of communities as Scheduled Tribe or Scheduled Caste" have "led to often violent claims and counterclaims about identities, both with regard to increasing social status and in terms of accessing economic benefits".
[18] Discussion with tribal people in Kotra on 21 September 2006.
[19] The noted Indian Anthropologist M.N. Srinivas (1952) first described such process of acculturation as "Sanskritization" by which, he meant, a low or middle Hindu caste or tribal or other group, changes its customs, ritual, ideology, and way of life in the direction of a high and frequently twice-born caste to claim high status in the caste hierarchy (see also Srinivas, 1956; Jaffrelot, 1998).

ceased to be tribes and have become castes or something else, and this has happened extensively elsewhere as well" (Beteille, 1998: 190).

In Rajasthan, although such contact between the Bhil tribes and the caste Hindus, especially the Rajputs, existed for a very long period, it increased to intimacy in the medieval period during the rule of Maharana Pratap, who was helped by the Bhils to fight against the Mughal emperor Akbar during the battle of Haldighati in 1576 (Mann and Mann, 1989: 158-9). This was further strengthened by the Bhagat movement, which was first started by Mavji Maharaj in the 18th century and popularized by Govind Giri in the early twentieth century, especially between 1907 and 1913. It propagated the Sanskritic traits and Hindu religious values, such as believing in Karma, reincarnation and the omnipresence of god, following of vegetarianism, not to kill animals, stop drinking alcohol and so on among the tribes of Rajasthan (*ibid.*; Vashishtha, 1997; Mathur, 2000).

Also in the 1920s, Motilal Tejawat, a Jain by caste who mobilized the tribals against the colonial forces and the feudal lords, worked to reform the values and practices of the so called uncivilized, animistic people to bring them to the mainstream of Hindu cultural life (Mathur, 2000; Singh, 1995). As a result of such efforts of integration, the tribes of Rajasthan have been integral to the Hindu social and religious order.

Some scholars have also argued that the origin of the tribes in India is rooted in the "pre-Aryan" and "pre-Hindu" indigenes of South Asia who were conquered by the Aryan bearers of Hindu culture, caste and language (see Weisgrau, 1993: 9-12). The advocates of Hindutva have disagreed with such pronouncements and have argued that neither the tribals are the original inhabitants (*adivasis*) of this country nor did the Aryans come from outside. For them, the Hindus and Aryans are one and the same, and were the

first settlers of this land (i.e. Saptasindhu); but some of them have forcibly been converted by the alien religions like Christianity and Islam.

Many other scholars have argued that the term tribe or its Sanskrit equivalent *adivasi,* which meant the aboriginal or autochthonous, is a colonial construction.[20] In India, it was introduced by the colonial authorities in the 1935 *Government of India Act* for administrative purposes to refer to the socially and economically disadvantaged groups (see Beteille, 1998: 189; Chaube, 1999: 524; Hewage, 2000: 25; Jenkins, 2003: 1144). During colonial rule, groups disclaimed the label of *adivasis* since it implied inferior status, but the success of *adivasi* struggles in the central regions of India for autonomy and self-governance have given a new value to this identity (Kamat, 2002: 26).

The advocates of Hindutva have held that the British colonialism leveled the tribals as *adivasis* or original inhabitants (thus, the Hindus as aliens) and their religion as animism as a part of its "divide and rule" policy to prolong the colonial rule. The Christian missionaries played an important role in this direction by linking up humanitarian activities with proselytization (see Sinha, 1991: 65).[21]

The RVKP has declared that tribals are the indispensable part of the Hindu social and religious order. It has defied the colonial painting of tribal identity as *adivasis*. Instead, it has preferred to call them *vanvasis* (forest dwellers) as distinct from *gaonvasis* (village dwellers) and *shahrvasis* (urban dwellers), though many *vanvasis* themselves

[20] According to John Comaroff (1996: 163), "'tribal' differences and traditions were invented, promoted, and exploited" by the "colonial regimes and their successor states" for reasons such as to exercise political control, to regulate labour, and several others (see also Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983; Dirks, 1992: 3).

[21] The RVKP often quotes a story of a Christian named J.C. Kumarappa who mentioned that "there are four pillars of strength on which British Empire stands – navy, army, air forces and the missionaries. The work which cannot be performed by the former three forces is performed by the missionaries. With the spread of education and health services, missionaries have become closer to the tribal society and gradually converted them into Christianity. They have thus created a unique and separate identity among the tribals who have developed hatred towards the Hindu society and demanding separation and autonomy from the Indian state" (*Bappa Rawal,* February 1994: 10-3).

find the term objectionable with its connotation of savagery or wildness (Sunder, 2002: 374). As V.C Garg, a member of the RVKP asserted, "we do not call them *adivasi*; we call them *vanvasi* because adivasi means they are the original inhabitants of the country and others have come from outside; we call them vanvasi because they live in forest and others live in villages or towns".[22]

To corroborate the tribal identity as *vanvasi* Hindus, the RVKP has produced popular narratives from the Hindu sacred texts such as the *Ramayana,* the *Mahabharata,* the *Gita,* and the *Purans*. One example is Lord Rama's 14 year exile in the forest and his eating of fruits from a tribal woman known as Shabri. Shabri's place, which is situated in the Dang district of Gujarat, is now considered as an important religious pilgrimage (*Shabri Dham*) for tribals all over India. In February 2006, the VKA organized the *Shabri Kumbha* (a religious congregation), which is claimed to be attended by approximately 0.8 million people, mostly tribals, from different parts of India (*Bappa Rawal,* April 2006: 4). Such stories project a shared identity between Hindus and tribals; and the RVKP has capitalized on such stories to mobilize tribals for the politics of Hindutva.

It was also claimed that during the *Rama Janmabhumi* movement,[23] the RVKP had mobilized large numbers of people in Kotra to travel to Ayodhya, who in fact witnessed the actual demolition of the Babri Mosque there (Hewage, 2000: 26). Such instances were proudly recounted by the RVKP's members as part of the "cherished collective memory" of the organization (Sarkar, 2005: 202). Thus, by drawing examples from the ancient Hindu sacred scriptures, the rich historical past and collective memory, the RVKP has redefined tribal identity as per the ideology and politics of Hindutva. By

[22] Discussion on 1 November 2006 at the RVKP head-office in Udaipur.
[23] It was launched by the VHP in 1984 to build a temple for lord Rama at his birth place in the north Indian city Ayodhya by replacing the Babri Mosque (van der Veer, 1987; Datta, 1991),

doing so, the RVKP has generated not only a sense of patriotism among tribals but also respect for Hindu rites, rituals and beliefs, including "mother India" and "holy cow".[24]

6.5: The RVKP and the Construction of "Victim-hood"

It is argued here that by polarizing identity as "us" and "them" and by demonizing the non-Hindus as the threatening others or the intimate enemy, the RVKP has been trying to regenerate the tribal selfhood and heroism for an assertive politics of identity in Rajasthan. It constantly reminds tribal people of their "victim-hood" in the hands of the non-Hindu others such as Muslims and Christians. The definition of this "other" is, however, "historically rooted", the narrative of which varies from context to context depending upon the nature of local history. It is also important to note that the idea of victim-hood is established through a process of selective elimination or deliberate deleting of the local history where the people of particular communities are painted ugly.

As it is seen in Kolyari village of Jhadol block, although the upper caste Hindus and Jain Baniyas together with the Muslims have dominated the economic and political sphere of social life, it is only the Muslims who have been portrayed by the RVKP as the oppressors of the tribal populations. According to the RVKP, the Muslim exploitation of tribals in south Rajasthan has its root in British colonialism. They first came to Kotra as colonial soldiers in the Mewar Bhil Corps to contain the Bhil unrest and insurgency. They used violent and oppressive means to suppress the Bhils, who were classified by the British as criminal tribes, and hence, a threat to the colonial state. After independence the

[24] While addressing a Hindu *Sammelan* (congregation) in Salumber, Mewar Mahamandaleswar Mahanta Murali Manohar Sharan Shastri (the religious head of Hindus in Udaipur) mentioned that a person is considered Hindu if he worships mother India and the sacred cow (*Dainik Bhaskar*, 11 January 2007, p. 4).

Muslims became involved in business activities, especially trade and money lending, and dominated the economic and political structures of the region.[25] There was also a time when all panchayats of Kotra block were ruled by Muslim *sarapanchs*.[26]

Such depiction of Muslims as exploiters could be described as a result of three basic reasons: (1) without such depiction the very existence of the RVKP will be in question, (2) the caste Hindus are the major support base of the RVKP and, its mother organization, the RSS, and (3) this helps the RVKP to legitimize its Hindutva ideology among the tribals and gain their trust. In doing so, the RVKP has ignored the long history of upper caste feudal exploitation in the region. Instead, it has selected certain incidences from the local history that glorifies the Hindu/Jain-tribal relationship (Jenkins, 1998:108).

Some such examples are the cases of Motilal Tejawat, a Jain Baniya who fought against tribal exploitation by the feudal lords and colonial rulers (Jain, 1989; Mathur, 1995; Sharma, 1996; Hardiman, 2007), and Maharana Pratap, the erstwhile king of Mewar who had acknowledged the contributions of the Bhils in the battle of Haldighati by honouring their leader, Poonja, with royal title (*Rana*) as well as by putting Poonja's figure beside him on the state emblem (Mann and Mann, 1989).

Similarly, the contributions of Mavji Maharaj (a Brahmin) and Govind Giri (a Banjara tribal) are narrated by the RVKP as they brought the tribals of Rajasthan closer to what Embree (1989) calls the "Brahmanical ideology" through religious reforms and practice of vegetarianism (see also Sharma, 1990; Vashishtha, 1997; Hardiman, 2003).[27]

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[25] Interview with B, an RVKP activist in Kolyari, on 27 October 2006.
[26] Discussion with Lalit Jain, the RVKP health in-charge in Kolyari, on 25 October 2006; Interview with Hamid Khan, Muslim leader in Kolyari, on 10 January 2007.
[27] According to Dirks (1996: 120) and van der Veer (1996: 13), Brahmanism's resistance of conversion to Christianity as well as its considerable influence over people of lower social strata like the dalits and tribals was the major reason for Christian missionary's lack of success in converting Indians.

The RVKP has thus utilized the local history for the construction of "the other", which is inevitable for its existence and legitimacy.

In addition to this, it has also projected the Christians as anti-nationals. With the establishment of Mewar Bhil Corps in Kherwada and Kotra in 1841, several Christian missionaries entered into the tribals regions and provided medical and educational services to the tribals in Jhadol and Banswara (Chaudhary, 1986: 130; Sen, 2003: 268-9). According to a pastor in Jhadol, the Church of North India was the first one to come there more than a hundred year ago to work with the tribals.[28] "The tribals attracted the attention of missionaries owing to their horrific practice of human sacrifices, deplorable socio-religious and economic conditions and their exploitation by the higher caste Hindus or moneylenders, Rajas, petty police officials, and traders in the tribal areas" (Shyamlal, 1989: 193; Sahay, 1968). However, scholars have argued that besides providing welfare, what encouraged missionaries to enter tribal regions was the idea of "white man's burden" or the mission of "civilizing the savage".[29]

The advocates of Hindutva argue that activities of missionaries in Jhadol visibly increased during the early post-colonial period due to the minority appeasing policies and vote bank politics of the Congress party.[30] As a pastor in Baghpura mentioned, more than 15 churches are currently working among the tribals in Jhadol block.[31] Because of the rising missionary activities, many of the tribals have converted into Christianity. The RSS

[28] Interview with the pastor of Leelawas Church and missionary school in Jhadol on 28 November 2006.
[29] As Comaroff and Comaroff (1997: 24) have said in African context, "[f]or the rising bourgeoisies Europe, the greatest threat to civilization, and to their own ascendancy, was a population living in dire, disorderly poverty. Hence the felt need to instill in the underclasses a 'proper' sense of morality, decency, and hygiene, a respect for property and prosperity, a measure of self control and modest ambition. Without these things there was little assurance of social order, let alone of a compliant, well regulated labour force". The "elevation" of the native served as the civilizing mission for colonialism.
[30] Interview with B, 27 October 2006.
[31] Discussion on 26 November 2006.

data claims that between 1981 and 1991, the Christian population in India increased by 17%; and in Udaipur it increased by 79.73% (Sridhar, 1999). Christians today form 0.1% of the Rajasthan's 56.5 million people.[32]

Religious conversion is taken seriously by the RVKP since it challenges the idea of nationhood as propounded by the RSS (Mallampalli, 2004: 14; Viswanathan, 1998). The RVKP has accused missionaries of carrying out religious conversion among the tribals through their education and healthcare facilities. Although a pastor in Baghpura agreed that welfare activities has accompanied the teaching of gospel which often leads to the conversion of the tribals, he declined the missionaries of carrying out any kind of forcible conversion or conversion by giving money as accused by the supporters of Hindutva.[33] Similarly, a pastor at Leelawas Mission School in Jhadol declared that:

> We help the tribal people during their problems, especially health problems. We provide medicines; and once they get cured, they start having faith on us, come to join the Church (*Girja*), and attend the prayers on Sunday morning. We don't force them to become converted. They like our religion and voluntarily wish to be associated with it. Many of the tribals who visit the Church are not Christians.[34]

Religious conversion was used by Christians as a means to "subvert the hierarchy" in the Hindu caste system that subjugated tribals and lower caste people (Pathak, 1987: 216-7). However, some people's experiences suggest that caste has not left them even after they are converted.[35] As Alexander (1967) has noted in the context of Kerala, conversions to

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[32] http://www.ucanews.com/2005/07/11/bishop-welcomes-communists-offer-of-help-to-christians-in-rajasthan/; accessed on 6 October 2008.
[33] Discussion on 26 November 2006.
[34] Interview, 28 November 2006.
[35] According to B (Interview, 27 October 2006), there exists social hierarchy and discrimination among the Christians. Those Christians who came with the Church are the original Christians and those tribals who got converted are called *Crypto* Christians. The Cryptos stand lower in prestige and ranking to the pure Christians in the religious hierarchy. Alexander (1967) has used "Neo-Christian" to refer to converts from

Christianity did not bring much improvement in the status of most of the converts, nor were they integrated into the traditional Christian community.

In the tribal society, conversion is considered as a stigma. Religious converts are excommunicated and are not allowed to participate in the cultural and religious activities of the community.[36] This is why many tribals do not express their religion in public; they keep it as a secret because others often accuse them of having converted for money and material benefits.[37] What is more interesting is that the tribals neither officially convert into Christianity nor do they accept Christian names because this will deprive them from claiming quota as provided by the Indian state for the scheduled tribes.[38]

Besides such increasing missionary activities, the growing communist support base among the tribals was also another concern for the RVKP in south Rajasthan.[39] Although the communists have not won any assembly or parliamentary seats in south Rajasthan, their support base has been, however, increasing at the panchayat level. They have supported minorities and regularly criticized the Hindu hard-liners for using conversion as an excuse to attack Christians in the state. Such activities and increasing influence of the communist party were perceived as threats to the political support base of the BJP among the tribals. To strengthen its hold, the RVKP has spread the ideology of Hindutva, which it believes will act as a "binding force" to unite all the small tribes together (*Bappa Rawal*, February 1994: 14-16).

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the lower castes to Christianity. van der Veer (1994: 26) has similarly noted that the converted Muslims enjoyed low status compared to the descendants of Muslim immigrants, who claim an origin outside India.

[36] Discussion with some tribal people in Kotra on 21 September 2006.

[37] Discussion with Prabhulal Ji in Baghpura on 30 November 2006.

[38] Interview with B, 27 October 2006. Mallampalli (2004:3-4) has similarly shown how the dalits who have converted to Christianity cannot access the quota system of the government because "having left Hinduism, they no longer qualify for assistance aimed at rectifying the historical abuses of Hinduism".

[39] Ideologically, the RVKP has believed that concepts like democracy, capitalism, socialism or communism have not just failed to improve the human condition but also proven contradictory to the traditional principles of Hindu thought (Anderson and Damle, 2005: 25; see also Hansen, 1999: 6).

It is thus evident that the objective of the RVKP is not to stop exploitation of the tribals but to stop religious conversion, Muslim dominance, and the growing political influence of the communists in the region. *The existence of the RVKP is justified not on the grounds of class and economic exploitation but on the grounds of culture, religion and identity or the politics of Hindutva.* This politics of Hindutva has been the prime latent objective of the RVKP, which is implemented through its several development and welfare projects. As a former Vice President of the RVKP declared, "development activities are just means to reach the tribals. The main objectives, however, are to teach the tribals about Hindu religion, to bring religious awakening among them, and to facilitate their inclusion/assimilation with the Hindu society".[40]

Similarly, the RVKP General Secretary mentioned that the objective of the RVKP is "to stop conversion, to make the tribals self-sufficient, and to persuade them to remain devoutly religious".[41] Thus, before discussing the RVKP's role in the religious and cultural sphere, it is important to discuss its various developmental activities that are implemented in the tribal regions of Rajasthan.

6.6: The RVKP and Tribal Development in Rajasthan

Though development, social service and welfare are not the primary objectives of the RVKP, they constitute important aspects of Hindutva politics. They facilitate the organization's entry into the villages, helping to create networks and solidify its base among the tribals. With the help of its various programmes, the RVKP has maintained a

[40] Interview on 19 December 2006 in Udaipur.
[41] *Swabalambi Aur Dharma Ke Prati Katar Rehna.* Interview on 18 December 2006 in Udaipur.

continuous relationship with the people and has made this relationship politically salient whenever necessary. As Lund (2006: 692) has argued in the African context:

> …[d]evelopment projects not only use various institutions and *bric-a-brac* in local communities to legitimate their operations. Such projects are themselves used, willy-nilly, as institutional vehicles for political projects by local political entrepreneurs. Development operators are in a particularly significant position to make "strategic translations" of ideas about not only "development", but public interest, authority and the state.

In order to make such "strategic translations", the volunteers and activists of the RVKP make constant visits to the villages and organize meetings with people to discuss their various problems. They have also formed village-level committees, which look after the developmental and religious problems in the villages. Since its beginning in 1978, the RVKP has expanded its activities into a range of areas (see Table 6.1; Appendix 2). This section, however, will briefly discuss three major aspects of the RVKP's tribal welfare and development programme – education, health, and economic development.

Education – The RVKP, since its inception, has emphasized the education of tribal children. There could be four basic reasons for which the RVKP has chosen to work on education. First, state failure in schooling reflected in "widespread teacher absenteeism, leaking roofs, non-existent toilets, no drinking water, no black-boards and no educational materials such as text books, maps, etc." (Sunder, 2004: 1606-7). Second, the literacy rate among the tribal population of Rajasthan has been very low.[42] Third, educational curriculum provides an important medium for the RVKP to inject its idea of nationalism and patriotism among the students, who will make the future generation of citizens. And finally, the RVKP can build relationships with tribal families and gain their

[42] As per the Census 1991, the literacy rate in Udaipur was 26%. The literacy in Kotra was 8.67% and in Jhadol was 19.81%. However, as the Census 2001 points out, the literacy rate in Udaipur has increased to 58.6%. In Kotra, it is now 24% and in Jhadol, it is 58.7%.

support by educating their children. Considering these, the RVKP has spent a considerable amount of money and time in its educational projects.

Today, the RVKP runs 13 hostels for 315 tribal students in 11 places of Rajasthan. Of these 13 hostels, 8 are funded by the Ministry of Welfare, Government of Rajasthan and the rest 5 are run by personal donations and fees from the students.[43] The RVKP has appointed an *Ashram Pramukh* (hostel in-charge) for each hostel whose responsibility is not just to look after the activities of the hostels but also to visit the villages to involve the people with its activities. Besides this, the RVKP has recently constructed a new hostel for the tribal college students in Udaipur, which has the capacity to accommodate approximately 250 students (*Bappa Rawal*, Dec. 2006: 28).[44] Students for these hostels are selected on the basis of their educational achievement and performance, the economic condition of their family, and the distance of their home from the school. A local hostel administration committee (*Chhatravas Sanchalan Samiti*) has been formed to monitor the activities of the students' hostels.

The RVKP also runs 120 pre-primary one teacher schools (*Ekal Vidyalaya*), 7 primary schools, 1 upper primary school and 2 secondary schools in the tribals regions of Rajasthan (RVKP Booklet, 2006: 25). Of the 120 *Ekal Vidyalayas* in Rajasthan, 35 (Jhadol – 13, Kotra – 15, and Gogunda – 7) are situated in Udaipur district, each of which has around 30 students.[45] The *Gram Shiksha Samiti* (village education committee) selects an *Acharya* (teacher) who teaches 3 hours everyday in the *Ekal Vidyalayas*. Although the RVKP provides all the logistics such as the curriculum, block-board, charts, books,

[43] Interview with Gopal Ji, in-charge of the RVKP's hostel department in Udaipur, on 15 February 2007.
[44] Funding for the construction of this hostel came from several sources such as from Mukesh Modi, a non-resident Indian, who donated Rs. 2.1 million; from the Member of Parliament who contributed Rs. 1 million, and from several other private donations (Interview with Gopal Ji, 15 February 2007).
[45] Interview with Shantilal Naroda, in-charge of RVKP's *Ekal Vidyalaya* in Udaipur, on 6 February 2007.

mattress, bell, chalk, slate, pencil, and picture of goddess Saraswati, it is the responsibility of the villagers to provide a space to run the school.

Besides this, the RVKP, as a part of the Rajasthan Shiksha Karmi Board, had begun primary schools in Jhadol and Kotra in 1987; but left the project in 2001 due to funding constraints during the Congress government.[46] The primary, upper primary and secondary schools of the RVKP are performing very well. There are 455 students enrolled in Kotra School and 188 students enrolled in Kolyari School. The people in Kotra block mentioned that the RVKP run school is better than the government run schools. One indicator of this is that many of its students have secured positions in the district level merit list in standard 8 Board examinations in 2006.[47]

Given the good performance of the school, even the Muslims in Kotra send their children to this school. Writing in the context of Chhattisgarh, Sunder (2004: 1611) declares that the popularity of RSS schools "with a wider circle of parents beyond the strictly converted [is] primarily because they perform the requisite educational function of producing 'good exam results', which appeals to middle class parents and children in a certificate-and-degree-oriented economy, and in a context where state schools suffer from gross neglect and under-funding".

Health – Due to widespread poverty and malnutrition, tribal people in Udaipur suffer from many deadly diseases. The government health care programmes have not been able to reach dispersed tribal houses. The volunteers of the RVKP have been active in the villages in creating awareness among the people and also in distributing medicines through the *Arogya Rakshak Kendra* (health promotion centres) for primary diseases.

[46] The RVKP ran 168 Shiksha Karmi Schools in Rajasthan which were attended by 10,506 students.
[47] Some of these students are – Jaya Bharati (94 %), Jayakishan (93.83 %), Khusbu Rani (93.67 %), Kumar Agrawal (92.33 %), and Bharat Kumar (90.05 %) (RVKP Booklet, 2006: 9).

Sixty such centres are running in Rajasthan. Besides this, the RVKP also runs 1 hospital and organizes health camps, where the people are treated for a minimal fee. Recently it organized the 13th Free Health Camp, which was attended by more than 1200 patients.[48] As a part of the Kotra Vanvasi Integrated Development Project, which is supported by the Bhanshali Trust,[49] the RVKP has trained 16 female health visitors in 16 panchayats to look after its Mother and Child Health care programme.

The most famous health service, which made the RVKP quite popular among the tribal populations of Kotra and Jhadol, is its tuberculosis (T.B) control programme. Nearly 4% of the population was affected by T.B in the region.[50] Taking this into account, the RVKP organized a T.B. detection camp in Makadadev village in Jhadol block on 13 April 1992, where sputum smear test and X-ray confirmed the initial diagnosis of contagious T.B in 18 patients. These patients were enrolled for 9 to 10 months long multi-drug treatment and were provided with all medicines and nutritional diet (*Posha Ahar*). To ensure that the patients followed the treatment properly, the fieldworkers of the RVKP visited their homes periodically and also educated their families about health and hygiene. The field staff also ensured that the patients were not consuming tobacco and alcohol. As a result, all 18 patients were completely recovered, which was a record success for the RVKP.[51]

Considering this success, an industrialist from Bombay, Shri Khemchandji Kothari, offered to meet the cost of the medicine for three years. He also donated a vehicle to the programme for the transportation of medicine and workers to the interior

[48] Interview with the Head Master of Vijaya Apte Secondary School, Kotra on 22 September 2006.
[49] Manoj Mehta, a Non-Resident Indian in Belgium has been donating Rs. 2 million every year through Bhanshali Trust of Gujarat to support the Kotra Vanvasi Integrated Development Project since April 2003.
[50] http://www.hinduweb.org/home/seva/vanvasi/VKARajasthan.htm, accessed on 18 October 2006.
[51] *Ibid*.

areas.[52] Another industrialist, Ramlalji Jain provided funds for other expenses; and the RVKP provided the infrastructural and volunteer support. There was further support from the Ministry of Health, Government of Rajasthan in 1995, which helped the expansion of the programme into other villages. The RVKP opened 17 T.B. control centers in Jhadol and Kotra covering 256 villages where it distributed medicines and nutritional diets to the patients.[53] The RVKP created a world record by curing 3892 patients with a curing rate of 89.64% (RVKP Booklet, 2006: 24). The U.N. also declared the RVKP's T.B control programme a success (*ibid*.).

Table 6.1: Activities of the RVKP by December 2006

***Shiksha Prakalp* (Education)**	***Gram Vikash and Arthik Unnayan* (Village Development and Economic Upliftment)**
Hostel – 13 Primary School – 7 Upper Primary School – 1 Secondary School – 2 Ekal Vidyalayas – 120	Anicuts – 23 Well Digging – 3585 Krushi Vikash Kendra – 32 Sewing Center – 05 Nabodaya Kendra – 01
***Sanskara Prakalp* (Child Care)**	***Khel Prakalp* (Sports)**
Bal Sanskara Kendra – 85	Khel Kendra for the Youth – 128
***Chikischha Prakalp* (Health)**	***Shradha Jagaran Prakalp* (Faith and Culture)**
Arogya Rakshak – 60 Hospital – 1 (Kotra) Chikischha Sibir – 1 every Week in Kotra & 1 every month in other districts Ambulance – 1 (Chal Chikischha)	Bhajan Mandali and Satsang Kendra – 415 **Total Project – 865** **Total Project in Places – 780**

Source: (RVKP Booklet, 2006)

Economic Development – The RVKP's economic development activities can be divided into two basic aspects – water resources development and agricultural development with advanced technology. As Rajasthan is a drought prone area and agriculture constitutes the

[52] *Ibid*.
[53] *Ibid*.

major source of peoples' livelihood, the RVKP has advocated traditional methods of conserving rain water for agricultural and other purposes. The Innovative Project of the Government of India provided Rs. 10 million to the RVKP between 1997 and 2003 to improve the livelihoods of the tribal people. As a part of this project, the RVKP has deepened 406 wells (of which 175 are pucca wells), built 13 check dams/anicuts and distributed 16 pump-sets (of which 4 lift irrigation were fixed). Suyas Charitable Trust from Pune provided technical training on advance agriculture. It has also constructed 5 *bidi* (indigenous cigarette) rolling centres, which generated income and provided employment to the tribal people. Besides the Innovative Project, the RVKP has deepened 700 wells, built 7 check dams/anicuts and distributed 32 pump-sets as a part of Kotra Vanvasi Integrated Development Project.[54]

The RVKP has also built a handicraft (*Mukut Nirman*) industry in Abu Road and has recently distributed fruit plants and vegetable seeds in 5000 family.[55] As per the data, the RVKP has dug 3585 wells and built 23 anicuts, 32 agriculture development centres, 5 sewing centres and 1 small-scale industry as a part of its economic development and income generation programme in the tribal areas of Rajasthan (RVKP Booklet, 2006: 25).

Besides the water and agricultural development programmes, the RVKP has also fought for the rights of tribals. It negotiated with the BJP led NDA government on the issue of tribals' right to forest land and also advocated for appropriate price for their products in the market. It has been creating awareness among the tribals about their rights and various government programmes for tribal development. Recently, it negotiated with the Jhadol Sub-Divisional Magistrate about the exclusion of poor tribal families from

[54] Interview with J.P. Joshi, in-charge of Economic Development of the RVKP, on 13 February 2007.
[55] *Ibid.*

government's poverty list.[56] Thus, the RVKP has played a major role in the educational, health and economic development of tribal society and has built a strong social network among the tribal populations of Rajasthan.

6.7: Socialization into the Politics of Hindutva

It is argued in this section that the RVKP has utilized its various development projects as a medium to spread the politics of Hindutva among the tribals and to establish its own version of "good" society, where the non-Hindu "others" will either be assimilated into the Hindu social order or be eliminated from society. As discussed earlier, the Constitution has held the tribals as the indigenous people of India; and hence distinct from the Hindus.

Contrary to this, the RSS and its organizations have declared the tribals as Hindus. For them, religious conversion of tribal people into the "foreign" religions, such as Islam and Christianity, is a threat to Hindu society because it increases the number of "enemies" (van der Veer, 1996: 12).[57] The RVKP contends that the portrayal of tribals as non-Hindus, the increasing missionary activities, and the tribal people's habitation in the forests have together resulted in their alienation from the mainstream of Hindu society.

The RVKP has followed diverse strategies for the integration of tribals with the Hindu society – a process referred by Oommen as "ethnification" (in Kumar and Welz, 2003: 107-8; Sahoo, 2008b). Having established itself as a counter-force to the politico-economic dominance of Muslims and the conversion politics of missionaries, the RVKP

[56] Interview with B, 1 December 2006.
[57] This was written on the walls of Kotra students' hostel (*Yadi ek Hindu apna dharma parivartan kar leta hei to Hindu ghatata nahin walki ek dusman badh jata hei* – taken on 22 September 2006).

has used development projects as means to enter the tribal regions, to legitimize its position, and to gain the support of the tribal communities. It has carried out a continuous and planned process of political socialization of the tribal populations into the ideology of Hindutva through its educational programmes, health projects, socio-cultural reforms, celebration of Hindu festivals, sports competitions, village committees, and so on. Each of these projects intends not just to dissociate the tribal populations from the missionaries and Muslim business communities but also to bring them closer towards the organization/ideology of Hindutva and Sangh Parivar.

The RVKP's schools and hostels ensure the firm footing of Hindutva in the tribal region. These schools and hostels act as the agencies through which the RVKP spreads its education, culture and ideology to the younger generations. As a result, "it is not only a sense of 'collective identity' that is being tentatively constructed, but also a social body of future generation of Indian citizens: a social body which, ideally, should be unconditionally devoted to the nation's love and service" (Benei, 2001: 204-5). These objectives are explicitly reflected in RVKP's educational programme, which aims "to develop a national education system that will produce a younger generation filled with the ideology of Hindutva and patriotism".[58] The RVKP declares that:

> Our objective is to impart good education among the younger generations and spread the virtues of patriotism, good manner, courage and social service to create self-sufficient, dignified and patriotic citizens in the tribal region who can fight against the social ills, exploitation and injustice – on the basis of which India will again arise as a new strong/powerful, developed and cultured nation.[59]

[58] Booklet on Students' daily routine provided by the RVKP.

[59] This is the translated theme of the objective printed on the walls of Vijaya Apte Secondary School in Kotra, taken on 22 September 2006. As the objective reads in Hindi – *durgam bananchal ki nayee pidhi mein uttam shiksha ke sath, sath shrestha sanskaron dwara rashtra bhakti, sadachar, sahas, abam seva ke gunon ka vikash karte hue swavalambi, swabhimani tatha desha bhakta nagarik tayaar karna taki*

By projecting schools as temples (*Mandir*) or hermitages (*Ashram*) (e.g. *Vijaya Apte Vidya Mandir* in Kotra and *Mohan Ashram* in Kolyari), the RVKP introduces religion into education. The Indianization of concepts is taken to mean their simultaneous Hinduization since a *Mandir* is a Hindu place of worship (Sunder, 2004: 1609; Sarkar, 2005: 200). The RVKP schools and hostels attempt to ingrain "a singularly insular love for the motherland" in each schoolchild and teach her/him about its own variety of nationalism and nationhood, where the non-Hindu others are portrayed as anti-nationals and exploiters (Benei, 2001: 204).

According to Sunder (2004: 1609), the institution of school acts "as a space where Hindu dharma and Hindu sanskars are asserted with pride [and] where tradition is saved and transmitted as against the 'deculturation' or 'christianity and western mores'…". Tanika Sarkar (2005: 200) has similarly argued that "here the pedagogical aim becomes explicitly and very directly political and immediately links up with the RSS design of Hindu Rashtra".

The life styles and daily activities of the students and teachers are guided by Hindu rituals and traditions. Sanskrit is considered as the sacred language of Hindus and is heavily used in the schools. The students recite a variety of sacred hymns and prayers. They are taught to use Sanskrit terms like *Acharya* or *Guruji* and *Guruma* instead of "Sir" or "Madam" to address the teachers. Emphasis is given on the students to respect the elders and obey them. Traditional family values are taught to be respected. They are also taught to greet the teachers and guests by touching their feet. Traditional Hindu

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bananchal me bidyaman samajik kuritiyan, shosan tatha anyaya se mukta samaj jivan khada ho sake jiske adhar par bharat punah sudrudh, susampanna tatha susanskrut rashtra ban sakega.

values are also followed by the teachers, which are reflected in their dress. The male teachers wear white trousers and shirts, and the lady teachers wear white *sarees* as a marker of upholding tradition.

A strict daily routine or *Dinacharya* is followed in the schools and hostels that bring moral discipline in the life of students. This routine injects Hindu religious flavours into the student's daily life. The day in hostels and schools begin and end with patriotic and religious prayers. For example, as per the routine in the hostels, the students are required to perform the morning-prayer and the evening prayer. Added to this, it is also compulsory for them to chant *Bhojan Mantra* (food prayer) each time before taking food.

Similarly, in the schools, a mass prayer is organized before the classes begin. Both the teachers and the students join the prayer session in front of the picture of Saraswati, who, in Hindu religion, is worshipped as the goddess of knowledge. They sing the *Saraswati Vandana* (prayer for Saraswati) together (even the Muslim students) which glorifies Mother India. The students shout patriotic slogans like *Bharat Mata ki Jay* and *Vande Mataram,* which mean victory to Mother India.

This is followed by *Tilak* ceremony, where vermilion mark is put on everyone's forehead, which has religious and symbolic meaning for the Hindus (see Appendix 3). There are approximately 50 Muslim students who come to Vijaya Apte Vidya Mandir in Kotra.[60] Some of their parents complained about the vermillion mark since it was against their religious beliefs but they were told to withdraw their children from school. Some took away their children while others did not as it was comparatively the better school in the region. They clean the vermillion mark off their child's forehead when s/he returns

[60] Interview with Jagdish Patidar, in-charge of the RVKP's Kotra branch, on 20 September 2006.

home after the school.[61] Nandini Sunder (2004: 1611) is right to note that "while such non-RSS [and non-Hindu] parents may not desire an overtly Hindu education, here the discipline and sanskars become a bonus because they are tagged on to success in exams".

The RVKP's schools have largely followed the Rajasthan State educational curriculum. In addition to this, they also follow some additional curriculum of the RSS that emphasizes character-building and is influenced by Hindu religious values. "Becoming a teacher in the RVKP run schools generally requires a prior and special commitment to the RSS agenda, which is further reinforced by the ideological training they periodically receive" (Sunder, 2004: 1608).

Such commitments and trainings are important in instilling moral values into student's lives, such as, *swanusashan* (self-discipline), *swadesha-prema* (patriotism), *swacharitrata* (good character), *swadhyaya* (devotion), *sadbyabahar* (good behaviour), *swabalamban* (self-reliance), *sevabhab* (social service), *guru bhakti* (respect for teachers), and *matru-pitru bhakti* (respect for parents).[62] The RVKP also organizes training camps for the students of its schools where they are intensely introduced to the Hindutva ideology.

The textbooks distributed to students in the RVKP schools include excerpts from Hindu sacred texts (*Gita, Veda* and *Upanishad*), religious prayers (*Ekatmata Stotr* and *Matru Vandana*), and life of Hindu patriots (Vivekananda, Sri Guruji, and others). The schools follow Hindu calendar, observe the Hindu religious festivals (Janmastami, Vyas Purnima), and celebrate birthdays of nationalist and religious leaders like Maharana Pratap, Mahatma Gandhi, Balmiki, Vivekananda, Sri Guruji, and others.

[61] Discussion with Laxmi and Ansita, staffs of Seva Mandir in Kotra, on 18 September 2006.
[62] Booklet on Student's daily routine provided by the RVKP.

Tanika Sarkar (2005: 202) was right in pointing out that besides the meticulous observance of Hindu rituals and festivals there is always a temple either within the school premises or in close vicinity. It was observed that in the Kotra school campus there were temples of Lord Ram, the monkey god Hanuman, and Lord Shiva, which had become a part of regular school life for every student (see picture in Appendix 3). "The *Ekatmata Stotr,* which the students recite to start the school day names the places associated with Hindu sacred geography, Hindu mythological figures, the sacred books of Hindus, Jains, Buddhists and Sikhs, Hindu saints and poets, Hindu kings and queens and finally RSS leaders like Hedgewar and Golwalkar" (Sunder, 2004: 1609).

The students are taught to be patriotic and nationalistic. For example, when someone visits the classrooms, the students stand up and greet with the patriotic slogan *Vande Mataram*. The class-rooms and hostel rooms are named after Hindu and tribal martyrs, religious leaders and patriots; the walls of the schools and hostels are filled with patriotic slogans and religious verses. Pictures of mother India, Hindu gods and goddesses, and patriotic Hindu leaders like Maharana Pratap, Shivaji and Rana Poonja, who had fought against the "Muslims", were also painted and hung on walls of schools and hostels. The schools were, thus, marked by "a striking visual display of Hindu political symbols that blend militancy with sacredness" (Sarkar, 2005: 201).

Besides this, the RVKP instructs the students that the interests of the nation is more important than the interests of individual[63] and celebrates the death of individual for the cause of nation.[64] It portrays Hinduism as the supreme religion and teaches that the destruction of Hinduism would mean the destruction of truth, justice, humanity and peace

[63] *Hume Apna Desh Pranose Pyara Hei* (from RVKP Booklet to Students)
[64] From the walls of Kotra tribal students' hostel run by the RVKP taken on 22 September 2006 (*Khun ka oh Akhiri Katra jo Watan ki Hifajat mein Gire Duniyan ki Sabse Anmol Chij Hei*).

from the world.[65] The believers of other faiths are presented as the enemies of Hindu society, who have been increasing their strength by converting Hindus into their religion.[66] The RVKP, thus, urges for the awakening and unity of Hindus, which, it believes, would establish India as a strong nation.[67] These patriotic feelings and ideals of Hindutva leave a deep impact in the life of students, which later gets manifested in their activities and behaviour.

The parents of the students and the villagers are connected to the RVKP through their children. "In order to achieve complete indoctrination, a constant attempt is made to wrest control over the family's socialization functions" (Sunder, 2004: 1610). Once the children are attached with the organization, the teachers and activists continuously visit their families, discuss their problems, develop informal relationship and gradually incorporate them into the organization and ideology.

The *Acharya* of the *Ekal Vidyalaya*, who is chosen from the village, works not just to educate the children but also to connect the villagers with the RVKP and to watch the activities of missionaries in the region. He is also instrumental in implementing RVKP's agenda in the village, such as executing development projects, organizing *Bhajan Mandlis* (evening devotional song programmes), and establishing *Shradha Jagaran Kendras* (religious awakening centres), women's groups and other religious and patriotic groups in the village. By doing this, the RVKP carries out a systematic planning to integrate the tribal populations with the national mainstream (Hinduism) and prepare them for nationalistic/patriotic causes.

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[65] *Vishwa se Hindu dharma Nasta ho Gaya to Satya, Nyaya, Manavata aur Shanti Sabhi Khatam ho Jayenge* (From the walls of Kotra Students' hostel)
[66] *Yadi ek Hindu Apna dharma Parivartan kar leta hei to Hindu Ghatata nahin Balki ek Dushman badh jata hei* (From the walls of Kotra Students' hostel)
[67] *Sangathit Hindu Samartha Bharat; Hindu Jagega desh Jagega* (From the walls of Kotra Students hostel)

The RVKP's village health promoter (*Arogya Rakshak*) also acts as a mobilizing agent in the village. To encourage people's participation in its activities, the RVKP has created several committees including the *Gram Shiksha Samiti* (village education committee), *Vidyalaya Samiti* (school committee), *Chhatravas Sanchalan Samiti* (hostel management committee), and *Gram Samiti* (village committee). With the help of health services, distribution of seeds, deepening of wells and building of anicuts and continuous discussion of village problems, the RVKP has maintained a very strong informal relationship with the tribals. The tribals have remained obliged to the RVKP for undertaking development projects in their region, which the organization often manipulates for its political interests.

Through sports competitions too the RVKP instills patriotism and feeling of nationalism among the tribal youth. In 1995, it organized the 3rd National Sports Competition in Udaipur where 10,000 tribals participated in the walkathon and 1000 players in the competition. The RVKP currently runs 128 sports centres in Rajasthan to develop the sports qualities among tribal youth and also to socialize them into the ideology and politics of Hindutva (RVKP Booklet, 2006: 25).

Another agency of mobilization is its *Shakti Kendra* (power centre) which acts as the coordinating medium between the village committees. Each centre includes 15 to 20 villages and 2 to 3 activists who remain responsible to look after the functioning of *Ekal Vidyalayas, Satsanga Kendras,* and *Bhajan Mandlis.* They are also required to take action on village conflicts, economic and developmental problems, health problems, and religious conversion. It is not necessary that all the villages under a particular *Shakti Kendra* will have developmental projects; the primary objective of *Shakti Kendra* is to

watch the activities of the Christian missionaries in those villages. There are currently 12 *Shakti Kendras* in Jhadol and 12 in Kotra block (see Appendix 2). Information spreading and decision-making at the *Shakti Kendra* is a two way process. Any information from the RVKP's block office to the villages as well as from the villages to the RVKP's block office passes through the *Shakti Kendra.* The RVKP is now also planning to form *Dharma Raksha Samiti* (religion protection committees) in the villages.[68]

The RVKP also socializes the tribal community into the ideology of Hindutva by organizing *Bhajan Mandlis, Bal Sanskar Kendras* and *Shradha Jagaran Kendras. Bhajan Mandlis* are the evening religious gatherings in the village where the tribals are drawn into Hindu religion and belief system through its devotional songs, prayers and preachings. These evening gatherings are organized once or twice a month where the villagers are encouraged to express their religious vitality and vigour.

Bal Sanskar Kendras are the child-care centres, which have been running in Rajasthan for past four years. This is the recent invention of the RVKP to instill patriotism among the small children. There are 85 centres in Rajasthan; of which 14 are in Jhadol block.[69] These centres are run by female agents of the RVKP in the villages, who narrate mythological stories and socialize children into the Hindu religious tradition at a very early stage. These female agents also play important roles in organizing the women of the village and in coordinating the child's parents with the RVKP.

Shradha Jagaran is another important tool of the RVKP. The primary objective of this programme is to protect the supposed national cultural and religious identity. In addition to this, it also aims to create religious awakening and to stop separatist demands

[68] Interview with B, 27 October 2006.
[69] *Ibid.*

that will lead to the division of the country. According to the data, the RVKP runs 415 *Shradha Jagaran Kendras* in Rajasthan (RVKP Booklet, 2006: 25). As a part of the programme, it has also built a temple known as the *Rama Janaki Mandir* in Chhadi village of Banswara district in south Rajasthan.

The RVKP has also formed the village religious committee (*Gram Satsang Samiti*), which bears the responsibility of organizing religious programmes as well as watching the activities of the missionaries and Muslims in the region. The impact of the committee has become such that "if a stranger comes to a tribal village, the people will ask him about the purpose of his visit".[70] With the help of these village committees, the RVKP celebrated Janmastami or the birth ceremony of Lord Krishna in 18 *Shakti Kendras;* distributed Ganesh idols in 1050 places in all 11 tribal districts of Rajasthan and facilitated collective immersion ceremony for Ganesh idol in 42 places, which were addressed by RSS and religious leaders and attended by 100,000 tribal populations.[71] It also organized *Raksha Bandhan Karyakram* (tying of religious protection thread) in all 11 districts where it distributed the thread in 70,000 families.[72]

As a part of its *Shradha Jagaran* programme, the RVKP organizes different kinds of religious congregations 2 to 3 times a year in the tribal areas where Hindu religious leaders and saints are invited to address the gatherings.[73] These saints are considered not just "people with special insight" but also "the most legitimate interpreters of the 'national soul'" (Anderson and Damle, 2005: 31). They preach about the greatness of

[70] Interview with B, 27 October 2006.
[71] RVKP Pamphlet, March 2005 - February 2006
[72] The festival is marked by the tying of a *rakhi* or a holy thread by the sister on the wrist of her brother. The brother, in return, offers a gift to his sister and vows to look after her. The RVKP celebrates *rakhi* with the objective to ask people to protect their religion and culture (RVKP Pamphlet, Mar 2005 - Feb 2006).
[73] Interview with the Head Master of Vijaya Apte Secondary School, Kotra on 22 September 2006.

Hindu religion and glorify the "idea of India". They also point out that the idea of a unified (Hindu) India is being threatened by the so called anti-nationalist groups, i.e. the Muslims and the Christians; and urge people check the activities of these groups to stop further division of the country.

The RVKP has also organized visits of tribal populations to various Hindu religious places. In February 2006, it facilitated the visit of 10,000 tribals from Rajasthan to *Shabri Kumbh* in Gujarat, which is regarded as a sacred place for tribals in India. This programme was attended by 0.8 million people, and was addressed by Hindu religious leaders, RSS ideologues and political leaders from the BJP (RVKP Booklet, 2006: 24; *Bappa Rawal,* April 2006: 9). The objective of this programme was to generate awareness among the tribals about the missionary activities and to connect them with the mainstream Hindu society.

Alongside this, the RVKP also organizes mass re-conversion programmes or public religious purification ceremonies to bring the already converted tribals back into their reputed ancestral religion of Hinduism.[74] This programme is described by many names, such as *Diksha* (oath taking), *Paravartan* (returning), *Shuddi* (purification) and *Gharwapsi* (homecoming). A mass religious ceremony is organized by the RVKP where the converted tribals express their grief for leaving the ancestral religion and pledge not to do it again. These religious ceremonies are conducted and attended by many Hindu religious leaders and saints who purify and bring the Christian tribals back to the Hindu religion through the chanting of religious hymns and the use of sacred fire (*Homa*).

The RVKP distributes lockets of Lord Ram, lockets of *Om*, pictures of Lord Ram and religious calendars among the reconverted tribals. It also sometime gives out sacred

[74] Discussion with the head of education department of the RVKP in Udaipur on 18 December 2006.

threads (*Janaus*) to the reconverted tribals, which is a purely Brahminical Hindu symbol.[75] Data show that during March 2005 and February 2006, the RVKP has reconverted 103 tribals of 56 families in 11 villages of Mangaleshwar (Banswara); 225 tribals of 136 families in 24 villages of Timmeda (Banswara); and 160 tribals of 80 families in 13 villages in Amba (Udaipur).[76]

The RVKP's monthly magazine *Bappa Rawal*[77], which is freely circulated, also acts as a powerful medium to spread its ideology, especially among the educated tribals and Hindus. The contents of the magazine deals with issues like the activities of the RVKP, improvement of agriculture and water conservation, the RSS idea of making India a Hindu Rashtra, conversion activities carried out by missionaries, the proud historical past of Mewar, the role of tribals in nation-building, life story of Hindutva ideologues, and global capitalism's threat to Indian culture. Every issue of *Bappa Rawal* reproduces stories from local history that legitimizes the RVKP's agenda of assimilating the tribals with the mainstream Hindu society. In fact, the history of Mewar provides very many examples of the cooperative relationship between Hindus and the tribals, the propagation of which are geared to influence the mindset of educated individuals.

It is thus evident from the above discussion that the volunteers and activists of the RVKP and the members of its various committees, who could be referred to as the *naya netas,* have played significant role in mobilizing the masses and socializing them into the politics of Hindutva at the grassroots. Although some of these activists receive a token salary for their basic sustenance majority of them are volunteers guided by a missionary zeal that is inherently exclusivist/sectarian. They have utilized the various development

[75] Interview with Hemendra Chandalia, a PTI Journalist in Udaipur, on 7 January 2007.
[76] RVKP Pamphlet, March 2005 - February 2006.
[77] Bappa Rawal was the name of Rawal Kalbhoj (AD 734-753), the founder of Rajasthan's Mewar dynasty.

programmes to countervail the activities of Muslims, Christians and communists as well as to spread the Hindutva ideology among the tribals, to integrate them into mainstream Hindu society, and to transform southern Rajasthan into a "saffron" heartland.

6.8: The RVKP and the *Rashtra Shakti Sammelan*

The RVKP, as mentioned earlier, considers the RSS as its root organization (*Mul Sangathan*).[78] The then RSS *Sara Sanghchalak*, Sri Guruji, played an important role in the establishment of the VKA in Madhya Pradesh in 1952. The ideology of the RSS, especially of Sri Guruji, guides the functioning of the RVKP. Considering this, the RVKP decided to celebrate the birth centenary of Sri Guruji in Rajasthan by organizing the *Rashtra Shakti Sammelan* (National Power Meeting) in Udaipur on 25 February 2007.

The meeting provided a good opportunity for the RVKP to spread the ideology of Hindutva among the tribals and mobilize them to check the activities of the so called anti-nationalist forces. Some of the stated objectives of the Rashtra Shakti Sammelan[79] were: (1) to create unity and coordination among the tribals and Hindus through the ideas that "both belong to the same blood" and "tribals are the inseparable part of Hindu society"[80], (2) to protect the religion, culture and the motherland, (3) to fight against separatists (*Algaowadi Shakti*) and to stop religious conversion (*Dharmantaran Unmulan*), (4) to bridge the difference between town-people and village/forest dwellers, (5) to protect the tribal identity and culture, (6) to create awareness among people about regional tribal history and their contribution to nation-building, (7) to improve the economic condition

[78] Discussion with the General Secretary of the RVKP on 18 December 2006.
[79] These objectives were outlined by Bhagban Sahaya, the RVKP's State Organizing Secretary, on 12 January 2007 at Udaipur Town Hall during the Rashtra Shakti Sammelan opening ceremony.
[80] *Samrasta* and *Samanwaya* through *Tu Mein Ek Rakta* and *Vanvasi Hindu Samaj Ka Avinna Anga Hei.*

of the tribals (*vikash*), (8) to bring the tribals back into the national mainstream for the unity and strength of the nation[81], and (10) to develop society through religious means (*Dharmik Madhyam Se Samaj Ka Utthan*).

The RVKP volunteers visited to 6,000 tribal villages in 11 districts of Rajasthan to spread the message of Hindutva and to invite the tribals to attend the programme in Udaipur.[82] They invited the people by putting a Hindutva flag (saffron flag with *Om* inscription) on their houses, and by distributing *Bharatmata* (mother India) calendars and pamphlets. In 2003, during the VKA Golden Jubilee celebration, the RVKP claims to have distributed Lord Rama lockets, *Om Jhanda* (flags), and *Bharatmata* calendar among 132,000 tribal families in Rajasthan.[83]

Besides the personal invitation to tribal families, it also organized several small *sammelans* in the tribal areas to create awareness among the people about the Rashtra Shakti Sammelan and to encourage them to participate in it. According to the RVKP, it organized more than 30 *yuva sammelan* (youth congregation), more than 30 *sant sammelan* (saint congregation to address the tribals), more than 30 *mahila sammelan* (women's congregation), 10 to 15 *kalas yatra* (holy walkathon of women having a sacred pot on their head), and 10 to 15 motorcycle rally in Rajasthan to mobilize people for the Rashtra Shakti Sammelan.[84]

On 12 January 2007, the RVKP organized the opening ceremony of Rashtra Shakti Sammelan at Udaipur town hall. In order to bridge the gap between the town people and the forest dwellers, or the Hindus and the tribals, Hindus were requested to

[81] *Vanvasiyon Ko Desh Ki Mukhya Dhara Mein Jodna Ekta Aur Akhandata Ke Liye.*
[82] Interview with J.P. Joshi, 13 February 2007.
[83] Interview with B, 1 December 2006.
[84] *Ibid.*

contribute food packets for their tribal brethrens who would come to participate in the programme. They were also asked to welcome them to the city in traditional ways. On 25 February 2007, the city of Udaipur was decorated in different colours to welcome the tribals from different parts of Rajasthan. The RVKP arranged buses for the people to attend the *sammelan.* The volunteers of the RVKP collected the food packets from the people in the city and distributed them among the participants. The RVKP claims that the *sammelan* was attended by more than 80,000 people (see picture in Appendix 3).[85]

Thousands of tribal people entered the city from different directions in their traditional dress, dance and music. People also came with their elephants, horses and camels. The city was filled with patriotic slogans, songs and symbols like flags, posters and banners. Several organizations of the RSS like the BJP, Seva Bharati, the VHP, and Bajrang Dal contributed towards the decoration of the city and welcomed the tribals with their organizational banners. The stage was also very nicely decorated with a background of traditional tribal village. One side of the stage was occupied by a large figure of Sri Guruji for whom the *sammelan* was organized and the other side by Rana Poonja who bridge the cultural gap between the upper caste Hindus and tribals in Rajasthan. The slogans on the stage not just glorified mother India (*Jay Bharat*) but also reflected the prime theme of the programme that is "to spread patriotic feelings to every corner – city, village and forests – of Indian society".

The function was addressed by the current RSS Chief K.S. Sudarshan; the chief religious leader of the Hindus in Udaipur, Murli Manohar Sharan Shastri; the religious head of the tribals in Rajasthan, Beneswar Dham Maharaj Achyutanand Ji; radical Hindu saint Swami Avdeshanand Ji; all-India VKA chief Prem Singh Marko, the RVKP chief

[85] http://www.rvkp.org/sopan.htm; accessed in February 2009.

Roop Singh Bhil; Mr. K.C Jain, an NRI from London; and many others. All of them spoke about religious conversion carried out by Christian missionaries in different tribal regions of India. Mr. Marko declared that anyone who is born in India is a Hindu irrespective of the gods and goddesses they worship and urged people to fight the "religious war" (*dharma yudh ladhenga*) against the missionaries in India. Murli Manohar Shastri pointed out that the power of the nation (*Rashtra Shakti*) and the responsibility of nation-building (*Rashtra Nirman*) lies with the tribals of India.

Both Achyutanand Ji and Sudarshan Ji spoke about the crisis of religion and values in Indian society and urged people to rise up to establish *Rama Rajya* (good society). Sudarshan Ji pointed out that when there is a crisis, God has descended to save religion and in *kaliyug* (recent times), the incarnation is the "Sangh" or the RSS. According to him, the cultural tradition of our country is Hindu that has been in presence since time immemorial. To him, "Hindus are born and others are made. When a person is born, he is born as a Hindu. He becomes a Christian when he is baptized; and a Muslim when he is circumcised. But none can be converted into Hinduism. He urged people to become organized to stop the conversion of Hindus into other religions".

Swami Avdeshanand Ji also addressed the tribals through patriotic flavour. He asked people not to let the nation get divided on the basis of religion and pointed out that the founders of RSS, especially Sri Guruji had played an important role in protecting Hindu religion, nation and the holy mother cow (*Dharma, Rashtra aur Gomata*). Rashtra Shakti Sammelan, thus, acted as a public sphere to spread patriotism and Hindutva ideals among the tribal populations of Rajasthan.

6.9: Relationship with the State and Political Society

The RVKP is a state-level voluntary organizational unit of all-India Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram and is registered under Rajasthan State Society Registration Act of 1958. Due to its ideological affiliation with the RSS and the BJP and its commitment to "making India Hindu" (Ludden, 2005), the RVKP shares an antithetical relationship with the Congress and the left parties, who traditionally have been the proponents of secular nationalism in India. Thus, its relationship with the state is contingent upon which political party is in power at the state-level as well as at the national level. Though the Indian Constitution guarantees freedom of religion, the RVKP has been opposing the propagation of Christianity in the tribal regions of India in general and of Rajasthan in particular. Its commitment to the ideology of Hindutva stands as an antithesis towards the liberal pluralist values of secularism, religious pluralism, tolerance, liberty, and equality of the Indian state and Constitution.

The RVKP supports those political parties that support the ideology and agenda of the RSS. Since BJP is the political wing of the RSS, the RVKP not only supports it ideologically but also campaigns for it during elections. As Mudgal (2004) has noted, out of the Rajasthan's 57 constituencies reserved for SC/ST candidates, the Congress had got 45 seats in 1998 elections with the BJP managing only four. But, in 2003, the BJP won 42 of these seats and its gain in SC and ST constituencies was in excess of an impressive 23% and 13% respectively (see Table 6.2).

This shift in the tribal loyalty from Congress to BJP in Rajasthan was largely due to the development works done by the organizations of Sangh Parivar among the tribals and lower caste populations. As Lodha (2004: 5461) has rightly noted, "the 'hyper-

activism' of saffron outfits in the tribal hinterland…accounts for the expansion of BJP's influence in villages". The Congress grossly underestimated the help Vasundhara Raje would get from the RSS front organizations such as the RVKP and Hindu Jagaran Manch that have been running schools, hostels and clinics in tribal areas (Mudgal, 2004).

Table 6.2: Vote Share in ST Reserved Seats since 1993, Rajasthan

Vote share in ST seats	INC	BJP
1993	40.4167	39.52888
1998	51.1405	32.42506
2003	34.5763	37.60917

Source: (Mrug, 2004: 12)

The activists of the RVKP, however, do not agree with this. For example, as a prominent activist at the RVKP's Kotra office declared that "we do not support any political party, neither the BJP nor the Congress….We are associated with people on a more personal level. We create individuals, not a party. It is, however, true that the individuals we created have been associated with the RVKP and the BJP".[86] This clearly shows that the RVKP, through its informal association with the tribals, has been engaged in a continuous process of political socialization that has helped it to reap the dividends during the time of election.

In addition to the developmental work of the RSS' organizations in the tribal regions, religious factors also played an important role in the growing acceptance of the BJP in Rajasthan. Data suggests that there is a strong feeling of resentment among people in Rajasthan against religious conversion (67%) and inter-religious marriages (74%) (Lodha, 2004: 5461). But, this feeling of resentment is comparatively lower in India as a

[86] Interview in Kotra on 20 September 2006.

whole (54% religious conversion and 56% inter-religious marriage) (*ibid*.). The political ideology of the RVKP and the BJP has contributed to bolstering such sentiments. In addition to this, the BJP also reinvented the martial Rajput identity which not only confirms the assertive nationalism of the Sangh Parivar but also appeals to various communities in Rajasthan (Jenkins, 1998: 104-7).

The RVKP and the BJP have also accused Congress rule of supporting missionary activities in the tribal areas and practicing several other minority appeasing policies to win votes. According to the RVKP, Kuber Singh, a Congress Member of Legislative Assembly from Jhadol who ruled continuously for almost 25 years, facilitated the spread the Christianity in Jhadol region for minority vote-bank politics. Since the BJP came to power in 2003 for the first time in the region, the organizations of the RSS have been active to stop religious conversion and missionary activities in the region. Besides this, the RVKP has also had various problems during the Congress regime in Rajasthan.

The RVKP does not accept funds from international donor agencies. Its funding is largely dependent upon the contributions of philanthropic Hindus from India and outside. The contributions of the Indian diaspora constitute a major part of the RVKP's activities in the tribal region. For example, Manoj Mehta, an NRI from Belgium has been donating through the Bhanshali Trust for the development of tribals in Kotra. Another NRI from London, Mr. K.C Jain, who was a guest at the Rashtra Shakti Sammelan 2007, has been contributing for various development activities of the RVKP. These contributions from NRIs are celebrated as their service to the motherland (*Janani Janma Bhumischa Swargadapi Gariyasi*). Besides, the RVKP, as discussed in Chapter 3, is also funded by

the India Development Relief Fund (USA) and Sewa International (U.K.) that have been reported to fund politics of hate in India (SC and SACW, 2002: 47).

The RVKP's principle is to take no government aid "in order to maintain the spirit of voluntarism and avoid government restrictions" (Sunder, 2004: 1609). But, over the years, it has been flexible enough to accept funds to run some of its schools, hostels and development projects. The RVKP activists argue that it decided to accept government funds because the so-called anti-national agencies like Christian and Muslim organizations are receiving funds from the government and spreading their activities.[87] When the BJP was in power in Rajasthan, it approved the RVKP to run *Shiksha Karmi* and *Lok Jumbis* schools in the tribal regions. In fact, the RVKP began its work in Jhadol block through *Shiksha Karmi* and *Lok Jumbis* projects for which it has been commonly known among the people as an (educational) agency of the government.[88] Data show that the RVKP ran 168 *Shiksha Karmi* Schools in Rajasthan.[89]

But, when Congress party came to power in 1998, it stopped the funding because it thought that the schools are increasing the support base of the BJP. Due to the funding constraints, the RVKP discontinued the *Shiksha Karmi* schools in 2001. The RVKP's hostel project also suffered from funding constraints during the Congress period. For example, the Ministry of Social Welfare, which had supported 8 hostels, put stringent restrictions on funding and did not issue funds regularly. According to the RVKP, this has now changed since the BJP returned to power in 2003.

The RVKP has instigated the tribals to use violence against Muslims who are cast as exploiters and Christians who are depicted as the proselytizers. It is no worse that

[87] Interview with Gopal Ji, in-charge of hostel department in the RVKP, on 15 February 2007.
[88] Interview with B, 1 December 2006.
[89] See RVKP leaflet that briefly describes its activities in Rajasthan.

violence against Muslims and Christians has been on rise in Rajasthan. In April 2007, some activists of the RSS attacked a Christian preacher in his house in the official neighborhood of Rajasthan Chief Minister in Jaipur.[90] There has also been an increase in looting of Muslims shops in the region by tribal populations.[91] The inculcation of hate politics of Hindutva has also resulted in the killing of two Muslim men in Juda village in Kotra.[92] The murders were also followed by open threats and abuses by the tribals that have forced many Muslims, including the Imam of the local mosque, to leave the village. A reign of terror unleashed by the tribals with the backing of the RVKP has compelled as many as 80 Muslim families to abandon their houses and migrate to nearby towns where their relatives stay.[93] A Muslim village councilor in Daya was also chased by the so-called "awakened" tribals and he has taken asylum in the Muslim dominated Kolyari village since last four years.[94]

Similar cases of large-scale participation of tribal people in organized violence were seen against Muslims during the 2002 Gujarat riot and against Christians in Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat since the late 1990s (Ludden, 2005: xv; Mosse, 2005a: 54; Menon and Nigam, 2007: 39; Nandy, 2008). It is perhaps because, as Juergensmeyer (2008: 222) has argued, "violence is empowering" to those marginal peoples who have not had power before. Abdul Aziz Khan, a Muslim leader in Kotra, notes that:

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[90] *The Hindu*, 30 April 2007; http://www.hindu.com/2007/04/30/stories/2007043005341200.htm.
[91] http://www.islamicvoice.com/january.2002/investigation.htm, accessed on 18 October 2006.
[92] A BJP leader from Kotra led a group of the RVKP activists on 26 Sept., and toured the area around Juda in a jeep to drum up support for a calculated attack. Following the beating of drums, hundreds of tribals gathered around the hills and resolved to take revenge for an incident in which a tribal youth was injured in a scuffle with Muslims. Since Habib Khan's *kirana* [grocery] shop was situated on the outskirts of Juda and the RVKP activists knew that he used to sleep alone in the shop during night, he was identified as the target for attack. The fifty-year-old man was brutally murdered with swords and arrows. After that, the tribals dispersed under the cover of darkness. Five persons were later arrested in connection with the murder.
[93] http://www.islamicvoice.com/january.2002/investigation.htm, accessed on 18 October 2006.
[94] Interaction with people in Kolyari and also with B, 27 October 2006.

> …the [R]VKP was actively promoted during the eight-year-long BJP rule [1990-98] in Rajasthan. In a bid to provide legitimacy to the Sangh Parivar outfit, the previous BJP government had allocated a number of projects under the tuberculosis control programme, Shiksha Karmi Yojana (an education scheme), and Vidyalaya Viheen Ikaai (units outside schools) to the [R]VKP for popularizing among the tribals.[95]

Such kinds of state support to the RVKP have intensified with the return of the BJP to power in Rajasthan in 2003. The BJP government has promoted the organizations of the RSS by facilitating their communal campaigns and ensuring that the state machinery turns a blind eye on their misdemeanors. The various institutions of law and governance such as the courts, the police, the legal system have, instead of providing security to the minorities, acted as facilitators of violence (Kaur 2005: 19; Hansen, 2005; Jenkins and Goetz, 2003: 135). According to the data, the BJP government in Rajasthan led by Vasundhara Raje has been allocating up to 5 million rupees per annum to the RVKP to run hostels, which are nothing but training camps for Hindu extremists (Singh, 2004).

Mrs. Raje has also continuously been visiting to *Beneswar Dham* and donating money for religious activities (see Appendix 3). Her government has lifted the ban on *trishul* (trident) distribution in Rajasthan and has selectively withdrawn a large number of cases related to communal conflicts filed during the previous Congress government in the state (Rajalakshmi, 2005). As per a news report, the government has ordered to withdraw 122 cases; while the fate of 68 others is under consideration (*The Hindu,* 13 August 2004). It does not need much guessing that most of these cases are against the activists of the RSS, VHP, Bajrang Dal, RVKP and Shiv Sena for inciting communal violence in the state. However, cases registered against members of the minority community in the same

[95] http://www.islamicvoice.com/january.2002/investigation.htm, accessed on 18 October 2006.

communal incidents have not been withdrawn. Many of these cases pertain to 2002 in the areas adjoining Gujarat and are linked to Gujarat genocide (Taneja, 2004).

The BJP government in Rajasthan has not only been promoting organizations of the RSS and spreading the ideology of Hindutva in the tribal regions of Rajasthan but also taken a belligerent stand on conversions. For example, the BJP government had put stringent restrictions on Kota Immanuel Mission and stopped its functioning in February 2006 on the grounds of funding irregularities, religious conversion and anti-national activities. The Mission's hospital was taken over by the Ministry of Health and the orphanage was taken over by the Ministry of Social Welfare (*Dainik Bhaskar,* 2 July 2006). After the decisions of the Court, the government gave the responsibilities back to the Mission in September 2006 (*Dainik Bhaskar,* 19 September 2006). Mrs. Raje's social welfare minister has also been regularly making provocative statements against minorities (Rajalakshmi, 2005). Moreover, the BJP government in Rajasthan also passed the Religious Freedom Bill on 20 March 2008, which aims to stop "conversions by force or allurement and promote 'freedom of conscience'" (*The Hindu,* 21 March 2008).[96]

Extensive economic as well as legal and political support from the institutions of state has helped the RVKP expand its activities into the tribal areas of Rajasthan. The BJP led developmental state has facilitated the expansion of the RVKP not just to receive the electoral support of the tribal population but also because of its genuine commitment

[96] Previously, the BJP government had introduced the Rajasthan Dharma Swatantraya (Religious Freedom) Bill in the State Assembly. The Bill was sent to the Governor for approval. But the Governor refused to approve it, and returned the Bill to the State Government in May 2006 because it violated the fundamental rights to religion of the individual. However, with the recent passing of the new Religious Freedom Bill by the BJP, the Opposition parties have accused it of serving the "majoritarian saffron agenda" of the RSS. In response the BJP has argued that a law restricting forcible religious conversions was the need of the hour as such activities had adversely affected communal harmony. Jogeshwar Garg, a BJP MLA noted that 'problems of fanaticism, terrorism and secessionism have always arisen in the areas where Hindus were reduced to minority by large-scale conversions' (*The Hindu*, 21 March 2008).

to the exclusivist ideology of Hindutva. The RVKP has thus received the moral and political confidence to "control" the activities of the so called anti-national forces to prevent the tribal population from being converted into Islam and Christianity, and to bring the already converted ones back into the Hindu social and religious order to strengthen its political project of "making India Hindu".

6.10: Conclusion: A Non-Secular, Politically Exclusive Civil Society Organization

It is evident from the above discussion that the RVKP has gained legitimacy in tribal society through the implementation of several development programmes in such areas as education, health, and economic development. It has helped the tribal populations in dealing with their problems, and has participated in their religious and cultural functions. It has advocated and negotiated with the state on issues concerning tribal welfare and rights. It also has managed to establish itself as a counter-force against the Muslims who are cast as exploiters and the Christians who are portrayed as proselytizers in the region.

Since its inception in 1978, the RVKP, in the pretext of several developmental activities, has actively manufactured and fomented distrust and conflict between the tribals and the non-Hindu others. Ideological socialization of the tribal populations in the classrooms, village committees, evening religious gatherings, and cultural and political practices has contributed to the manufacturing of such distrust. Decades of community based social work and development programmes are also utilized as patronage for the vote-bank politics of the BJP.

The RVKP's cultural mobilization through *Shradha Jagaran,* political socialization through education, and mass re-conversion through *Gharwapsi* have helped

it in gaining the electoral support of the tribal population for its political wing, the BJP. They have also helped the RVKP in absorbing the tribals into the Hindu fold in order to influence "the process of grievance formation" (Fox, 2000: 425) against the Muslim and Christian minorities; and then use collective violence against these same groups to exercise "social control" (Kaur, 2005: 20), maintain "dominance" (Brass, 2003) and "perpetuate the existing social [and political] order" (Sunder, 2004: 1611).

This legitimacy of the RVKP has further been strengthened by the active financial and political support from the BJP-led government in Rajasthan. Such active support from the institutions of state to the Hindutva groups has created a sense of fear and insecurity among the minority communities.

This shows that the politics of the developmental state in Rajasthan was also partly responsible for the rise of a non-secular, politically exclusive civil society organization like the RVKP. This has not only spread sectarian politics and violence but also demonized religious minorities as "the other", and threatened the cultural diversity and pluralism of Indian civilization. As a consequence, public life has been polarized on the basis of ethno-religious identity, and such polarization has proven positive for the politics of Hindutva and its acceptance among the marginalized people in Rajasthan.

7

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS: THE MULTIPLE FACES OF CIVIL SOCIETY

7.1: Introduction

In order to draw out the lessons from the empirical evidence presented in the preceding chapters, it is useful to recall some of the issues mentioned in Chapter 1. What is the nature of civil society in Rajasthan? Is civil society a democratizing force? When does civil society positively contribute to democratization? And, what implications do the preceding case studies have for the larger literature on civil society, state and democratization?

The case studies in the thesis present some pertinent issues relating to the role of civil society in democratization. They show that civil society in Rajasthan is multifaceted and largely constitutes a sphere for middle class activism. They also show that there are several factors that are in play in determining civil society's (here, NGOs) contribution in relation to democratization. These factors include not just the stock of social capital in the community but also the objectives, the ideologies (politicization/leadership) and the approaches of the organization as well as the nature of the state. The three case studies discussed in the thesis show three different tendencies towards democratization in Rajasthan (see Table 7.1).

7.2: Civil Society: A Sphere of Middle Class Activism

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, which signaled the demise of the language of state socialism as well as the spread of what many have identified as the "third-wave" of global democratization, the idea civil society has also been revived. The thesis argued that along with the political changes at the global level, especially the increasing international aid channeled to the third world, the economic and political challenges at the domestic sphere formed the prime motivating factors for the revival of civil society in India in the mid-1970s and 1980s. A movement was spawned to reform the corrupt, bureaucratic and paternalistic state that discouraged people's participation and undermined the autonomy of the people (top-down approach).

In India, beginning from the colonial times till today, the sphere of civil society has been dominated by the educated middle class, who tend to speak the language of liberalism. During the colonial period, national sentiment and anti-colonial struggle motivated the English educated middle class to form civil social associations. The so called non-modern public such as the peasants, the women, the lower castes and others were denied access to participate in civil society. During the early phases of post-colonial period, civil society also remained confined. The thesis argued that four interrelated factors were responsible for such confinement of civil society to the middle class: (1) the legacy of colonialism, (2) the statist model of development, (3) the suppression of communist mobilization, and (4) the appeal of Western style modernity. However, in the 1970s, failure of the statist model of development and the growing political populism ultimately leading to National Emergency, for the first time, generated mass-based inclusive civil society movements in response and in resistance to the state in India.

With the end of Emergency rule, some of these movements died down while others became institutionalized as NGOs. The state also recognized NGOs as partners in development, which occurred together with new pro-globalization policies as well as the growth of international development aid. It is in this context of economic liberalization, the educated middle class once again emerged to play important roles in managing NGO, which aimed to perform not just the role of effective and efficient public service contractors but also of dominant mediating actors between the people and the state. Even the grassroots level issue-based people's movements, such as the right to information movement of MKSS, the right to forest land movement of Astha, and so on, were initiated and guided by the educated middle class. The illiterate and non-modern masses always remained dependent upon the middle classes because of their inability to speak the legal and political language of the highly bureaucratic and modern state. As a result of this, civil society has not only been dominated by the middle classes but also by NGOs, which has resulted in the NGO-ification of civil society.

7.3: Civil Society and the State

It is evident from the preceding chapters that NGOs, as part of civil society, act as the mediating agents between the people and the state. They have implications for democratization, which has been contingent upon their objectives, ideology, approach, and leadership. These NGOs play important roles in the production and politicization of social capital in the communities. They provide leadership and mobilize the stock of social capital that exists within a community towards certain objectives, which may either be democratic or undemocratic. The nature of these objectives, as shown in the chapters,

is heavily influenced by the ideology of the organization, which is largely entangled with its leadership. This shows that, as Ndegwa (1996: 110) has argued, "civil society actions [are] the *dependent* variables that need to be explained rather than [being] the causal variables of political reform".

The case studies and empirical evidence presented in the preceding chapters show the "multiple faces" of civil society and defy the well established civil society-democratization thesis, which essentially assumes civil society as democratic and agent of political liberalization. The case studies suggest that the relationship between civil society and the state is not always antagonistic; it is largely dependent upon the ideology of the organization as well as the kind of political party that is in power. NGOs relationship with the state is marked by cooperation as well as conflict.

For example, Seva Mandir, because of its non-confrontational ideology as well as its closeness to the state bureaucratic structure, has maintained a very cooperative relationship with the state. Such ideology has also enabled the organization to maintain very good working relationship with all different political parties. Seva Mandir has envisioned the state as a minimalist organization that needs to be supplemented by voluntary activities rather than to be challenged. However, Astha has maintained a "critical" relationship with the state, and has recognized it as the central instrument of engagement and contention. While, it has cooperated the state in many of its programmes; it has also resisted the state when it refuses to listen to people's demands and violate their legitimate rights. Although Astha claims to be party neutral, it is ideologically close to the Communist and the Congress party. It does not have a very good relationship with the BJP because of the ideological difference between the two.

Table 7.1: A Comparison of Seva Mandir, Astha, and the RVKP

Organizations	Objective	Approach	Relations with State	Nature	Funding	Popular Perception	Problem Lies
Seva Mandir	Grassroots Development, Democratization	Service Delivery, Project Implementation	Collaborative, Conformationist	Apolitical Areligious	Donors, Government, Private Sector	Credible Institution of Development	Minimalist Nature of State and its Failure
Astha Sansthan	Social Justice, Citizenship Rights, Democratization	Issue-Based Activism, Conscientization, Claim-Making	Critical Engagement	Politicized Areligious	Donors, Government	Too Much Politicized (*Andolanatmak*)	Exploitative Structure, and Imbalance of Power Relations
RVKP	Making India Hindu, Spread of Hindutva	Religious Mobilization, Cultural Assimilation	Contingent upon which Party is in Power	Religious Politicization	Donations from Hindus, NRIs	Sectarian, Communal, Anti-Minority	Domination of Anti-Nationals like Muslims, Christians, and Communists

Organizations	Civil Society Paradigm	Ideological Influence	Organizational Tag Line
Seva Mandir	Liberal Pluralist	Gandhian idea of Constructive Work, Neo-Liberal Policies of Development	*Seva, Sadhana, Kranti* (Service, Devotion, Revolution)
Astha Sansthan	Neo-Marxist	Mahatma Gandhi, Marx, Mao, Paul Freire and Jayaprakash Narayan	Faith in the Power of the People
RVKP	Communitarian	RSS and Hindutva Ideology of V.D Savarkar, K.B. Hedegewar, and Sri Guruji	Loss of Culture, Loss of Identity; Let us lighten the Lamp to brighten the path, & empower the *Vanvasi*

By contrast, the RVKP's case is very unique. It is supported by the BJP since both share the same ideology and objective and are part of the Sangh Parivar. Due to the RVKP's commitment to the exclusivist Hindu nationalist ideology, it is opposed by the so called secular political parties such as the Congress and the Communists. As shown in the chapter, the RVKP faced several constraints when the Congress party was in power in Rajasthan, but have been receiving a wide-range of financial, legal and political support from the BJP government in last few years. In return, the RVKP has mobilized its beneficiaries to vote for the BJP.

This shows that "government support of NGOs is subject to the vagaries of political agenda" (Weisgrau, 1997: 209), where NGOs often act as agencies to distribute state patronage and to create electoral support base for their respective patrons. It also shows that "development" at the local level is intimately entangled with the changing dynamics and power relations between civil society, political society, and the state.

7.4: Ideology, Interest and Democratization

The case studies also reveal the contradictory consequences of civil society in relation to democratization in Rajasthan in particular and India in general. They show that the implications of civil society in relation to democratization is dependent upon the kinds of ideologies, interests, and leaderships that are present or are ascendant not just within the civil society itself but also within the state.

The case of Seva Mandir is very common in the context of the neoliberal aid regime. It is an organization that largely depends on international aid for its activities among the poor and marginalized populations. The objective of the organization is

democratic in nature and the organization has played an important role in organizing the ordinary people in the village into small groups and committees that could be referred to as having created a strong network of social capital in the community. It follows the Gandhian idea of "constructive social work" that emphasizes social reform and service delivery. Such ideology and leadership of the organization has actively discouraged any kind of confrontation with the institutions of state as well as with the feudal elites and other oppressive elements at the local level.

By doing so, it has also discouraged the mobilization of social capital against the oppressive social structures that has kept tribal populations historically marginalized. Villagers also do not dare to challenge Seva Mandir's approach with the fear that their defiance might lead to the organization's withdrawal, which will adversely affect the development of their village.

Seva Mandir has maintained a cooperative relationship with the institutions of the state. Some of the reasons for its closeness to the state are – its non-confrontational approach, its inclination to supplement state welfare roles, and the social reputation of its leadership and their closeness to the state structure. Such closeness of Seva Mandir to the agents of the state has, in fact, diminished the possibility of direct political action by the organization. If the state denies its demands, Seva Mandir and its beneficiaries prefer to stay silent rather than being drawn into a relationship that involves confrontation.

What seems to be determining the actions of the NGOs is their "ideology", which politicizes social capital in the community. The case of Seva Mandir shows that although the objective is democratic and although it shares cooperative relationship with the state, its implications towards democratization has remained very ambivalent. Although its

service delivery approach has brought some short-term benefits, it has preferred not to challenge the existing structure of oppressive relationship at the grassroots level. Instead, over the years, it has established itself as one of the most highly institutionalized and bureaucratic organizations in Rajasthan. Rather than redressing the oppressive structures, it has also unconsciously developed a culture of "organized dependency" among the people at the grassroots level, which has often had adverse consequences in relation to its objectives. It is primarily because the leadership of the organization chose not to be involved in actions that would defy the foundational principles (ideology) of the organization. This shows that the ideology and interests of the organization determines what kinds of action or approach its leadership should follow.

In contrast, Astha has followed a radical approach to rural development. It represents a typical movement-oriented organization that mobilizes people not just against the local oppressive social structures but also against the unaccountable bureaucracy and patrimonial state. Like Seva Mandir, Astha's objective is democratic in nature, which involves the development and empowerment of the marginalized sections of society. But, what distinguishes it from Seva Mandir and other voluntary organizations is its unique ideology and approach to development. Astha has maintained a critical relationship – cooperation as well as conflict – with the institutions of state. Astha's objectives and approaches are largely influenced by a unique mix of Gandhian and Marxist ideas that is committed to address the unequal and exploitative structure of relationship at the local level.

Astha has largely rejected the service delivery and project implementation approach to development. It believes that the problems of poverty, underdevelopment and

marginalization are not a result of the failure of individual but of structural and historical injustices. In order to address these problems, Astha has followed a rights-based "claim-making" approach to development that helps people to overcome dependency on NGOs, to challenge the vested interests groups, and to recognize the state as the central agency to ensure people's welfare. The first step in this direction is to organize people at the grassroots level through its people's organizations. It identifies the pressing needs of the people and sets up issue-based struggle committees. Like Seva Mandir, Astha's objective in forming such associations is to organize people into groups and build networks of cooperation or social capital.

Astha's approach to development is however very political. These networks become politicized through Astha's mass meetings and training programmes that impart political education among people. Although Seva Mandir organizes similar trainings and meetings, it actively discourages people's involvement in any kind of politicized activities. On the contrary, Astha's POs and struggle committees directly mobilize people to make their claims and demand their rights from the state. By doing so, it has politicized the stock of social capital in the direction of democratic objectives. It should be noted, however, that although politicization of social capital constitutes the first step, what determines the success of such struggle is the strength of the demand group, the nature of their objectives and the kinds of interests they are confronting.

Two kinds of situations may emerge in this case: (1) the strength of the demand group is such that it can force the opposition, including the state, to recognize its demands; and (2) the strength of the opposition is such that it can either ignore or, worse, suppress the struggle of the demand group. It is worth noting here that the consequences

and course of action largely depend on what is at stake or the nature of the interests. As discussed in the Chapter 5, Astha managed to recover jewelleries from the local money lenders and to stop the construction of cement factory in Kotra tribal region. In the case of jewellery recovery, the opposition money lenders constituted a weak opposition to large-scale people's struggle, which also received supports from the state – through the language of law and discourse of rights.

Similarly, state was also responsive in extending the tribal people's right to forest land. But in case of Mansi Wakal anti-dam displacement struggle, the state acted repressive to the people's struggle. The Mansi Wakal project aimed to provide clean drinking water to the residents of Udaipur city; and the people's struggle was an obstruction in the achievement of such a larger aim. In this case, the state was not willing to compromise with the demand group since it put a larger interest at stake. This, however, does not mean that the people's movement is always dependent upon the will of the state. Instead, people's movements have the power to redefine the structure and dynamics of the state and can often force the state to become responsive to its demands, as it was seen partly in the case of Astha's struggle for tribal people's right to forest land and also its struggle to stop the establishment of cement factory in the tribal dominated Kotra regions of Udaipur.

The case of Rajasthan Vanvasi Kalyan Parishad, however, reveals a uniquely different face of civil society. What makes it unique is that despite having been registered as a voluntary development organization, it pursues issues that are closely related to ethnicity, identity and religion. It has also often utilized violent means to achieve its objectives. Although the declared objective of the organization is to improve the socio-

economic conditions of the tribal communities in Rajasthan, its underlying objective has been to resist Christians and Muslims for they constitute the "threatening other". Such an objective is anti-democratic in the context of a society that demands peaceful coexistence of communities irrespective of caste, creed or colour. Because of its anti-democratic objective, which primarily is a result of its affiliation to the RSS and its exclusivist idea of nationalism and citizenship, every action of the RVKP stands as a threat to the secular democratic ethos of Indian society and polity.

In order to achieve this objective, the RVKP has followed the socio-economic and educational development programmes as mediums to reach and to consolidate its legitimacy in the tribal society. It has also exploited the preexisting Rajput regional identity that is "not only venerated by all communities in Rajasthan, but [it] also conform closely to the sort of assertive nationalism that the Sangh Parivar is attempting to project as a homogenized form of Hinduism" (Jenkins, 1998: 105). Like Seva Mandir and Astha, it has formed village-level committees, religious awakening centres, evening cultural and religious centres, and also a strong network of cooperation among the villagers.

The development and welfare programmes implemented by the RVKP, although help the rural poor, serve as mediums to spread the sectarian ideology of Hindutva at the grassroots level. The ideology and leadership of the organization have complemented each other to achieve its foundational objectives. The leaders of the RVKP are members of the RSS. The RVKP, through its several programmes, socializes the new members and beneficiaries into the ideology of the organization. By implementing several development programmes, the RVKP has deepened its legitimacy in the region and gained the "trust" of the tribals, which it utilizes to acquire the electoral support of the tribal communities

for the BJP, which shares the same objective of making India a Hindu nation. In order to achieve this objective, the RVKP has also often utilized tribal networks to instigate violence against religious minorities.

Since the objective of the RVKP is sectarian, its implications will always be anti-democratic. Its relationship with the state will only show how fast these objectives are pursued. If the RVKP shares a cooperative relationship with the state, its objectives will be easily pursued; and if the state behaves antagonistic, it will be difficult on the part of the RVKP in achieving its stated objectives. This means, whatever be its relationship with the state, the effect will be anti-democratic.

Given the RVKP's ideological proximity to the Hindu right, its relationship with the state will depend upon which political party is in power. As discussed in the chapter, during the rule of the Congress party in Rajasthan, the RVKP faced several constraints; but during the rule of Hindu right represented by the BJP, the activities of the RVKP expanded in the state. It received financial as well as legal support from the government that helped it freely implement its activities and pursue its objectives in the tribal regions of Rajasthan. The period of BJP rule witnessed increasing violence against the religious minorities and led to what Desai (2004) has called the "saffronization" of state and civil society in Rajasthan.

What seems to be determining the activities of all these organizations is their ideology, which has important effects in determining the objectives, approaches, and leaderships of the organizations. It is what politicizes social capital in the community and mobilizes towards a particular objective. In case of Seva Mandir, the constructive social work ideology of the organization prevented the organization from being involved in the

radical mobilization of the masses. It is due to this ideology that the stock of social capital could not become politicized towards larger democratic objective. In case of Astha, the radical socialist ideology influenced its objectives, politicized the stock of social capital in the community, and actively mobilized people towards democratic objectives. Contrary to these two, the RVKP, due to its affiliation to the Hindutva ideology, has followed an exclusivist and anti-democratic objective. It has also often used violence that has undermined the democratic character of Indian society.

It is evident in the above discussion that civil society is not always a democratic force; it is multifaceted and can have contradictory consequences in relation to democratization. The evidences also corroborate the claim that there might be different kinds of politicization where some may not even be supportive of democratization at all (Tornquist, 1998). The developmental and political actions of NGOs in civil society, as Ndegwa (1996: 110) has noted, are the "dependent variables" that are initiated and guided by the ideologies and interests of the organization.

The thesis also showed that civil society organizations do not always challenge the state. Civil society's relationship with the institutions of state is largely dependent upon the ideologies of the organization and the kinds of political parties that preside over the state. It can, thus, be concluded that the democratic effect of civil society is not a result of the "stock of social capital" in the community but is contingent upon the kinds of ideologies and interests that are present or ascendant not just within civil society but also within the state.

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APPENDIX 1

Table 1: Chronology of Events of the Struggle of the Forest Land People's Movement for Legal Rights to their Land

Date	Events
1978	A Rajasthan government notification was issued to redress the problem of land tenure of adivasi forest dwellers by ordering that forest land possessions prior to 1971 be regularized.
1991	In response to the Central Government's September 18, 1990 circulars intended to facilitate the resolution of disputes related to forest land between the Adivasis and the State, the Government of Rajasthan issued a notification stating that the regularization of forest lands in the people's possession prior to July 1st, 1980 was to be completed in 6 months, by July 31, 1991.
19 Aug. 95	After years of harassment and inaction by the Forest Department to regularize possessions on forest lands, Adivasis met in Udaipur and decided to take strong united actions to fight for rights to their land, and launched the Forest Land People's Movement (FLPM).
6 Oct. 95	The first Rally of the Forest Land People's Movement saw approximately 2,000 Adivasis gather in Udaipur. They marched to the Tribal Commissioners Office where the Movement's representatives gave a Memorandum to the Tribal and Divisional Commissioner requesting a process for regularization of land in their possession prior to 1980 and demanding that the people not be evicted from their land and. In response it was agreed that the Forest Department would start a process of identifying "encroachments" eligible for regularization.
6 Feb. 96	FLPM held a Sit-In (Dharna) in front of Tribal Commissioners Office, Udaipur, again demanding the regularization of adivasi homesteads on forest lands occupied prior to 1980.
7 Feb. 96	State Government agreed to extend the implementation of the 1991 notification to regularize pre-1980 possessions. The Tribal Commissioner provided written commitment to resolve the issue of regularization. This letter was copied and distributed to large numbers of adivasi forest dwellers, who then showed it to Forest Department officials savings them from further harassments and evictions.
March 96	As a result of letters written to all tribal MLA's, the issue of tribal land was raised in the State Assembly. These legislators also held a press conference to raise the demand for regularization of all pre-1980 forest land possession.
19 Aug. 96	To remind the government of its commitment, 800 people observed a symbolic strike and presented the Tribal Commissioner with a Memorandum stating that this action was only a reminder, and that if the government did not move on their assurance, the Movement would take further actions.
15 Dec. 96	The Movement's leaders met with the Chief Secretary of the Government of Rajasthan, during his visit to Udaipur, and advised him that some 10,000 adivasi families, who have been living on forest lands for the past 50-60 years in Udaipur District, faced the threat of eviction. A Memorandum was presented to the State Government asking them to regularize possessions according to their 1991 order.

6 Feb. 97	Some 5,000 tribal men and women took to the streets of Udaipur to protest the non-implementation of the 1991 notification and the failure to fulfill the 1996 assurance. They held a one-day Sit-In in front of the Tribal Commissioner's Office. He promised that camps would be held in each Forest Range area during the period from April to June 1997 in order to identify possessions prior to 1980.
9-10 Sept. 97	A large Rally of Adivasis convened at Udaipur's stadium to a hold a 2-day meeting. At the end of 2-days of slogans, songs and speeches proclaiming their rights, it was decided that if the government failed to regularize their lands by January 1st, 1998, they would hold a Sit-In until their demands were met.
7 May, 98	A delegation again met the Tribal Commissioner asking what steps had been taken to regularize the list of eligible possessions that the FLPM had submitted and that village level camps be organized to do a proper survey of the eligible possessions not yet on the list. After discussing their demands with the District Collector, the Commissioner assured the delegation that all eligible possessions would be identified and additional camps would be held to finalize the eligibility list.
7-14 Sept. 98	Thousands of people gathered at the Town Hall in Udaipur and marched to the Tribal Commissioner's Office. A delegation of 15 met with the Tribal Commissioner, asking for written assurance that the 12,000 tribal families, now identified by FLPM, in possession of forest land prior to 1980, not be evicted. They also demanded that a process for the implementation of Tribal Self Rule be started. The people declared that the Sit-In would continue until they were given proper written assurance that evictions would stop. Finally, on the 7th day, the Tribal Commissioner convened a meeting with Forest Department officials and other administrative officials and began dialogue with the FLPM delegates. The Movement was given written and sealed assurance from the Forest Department, that no one would be evicted from their land until verification of pre-1980 occupation had been done. The Sit-In was lifted on September 14, 1998.
26 Sept. 98-15 Oct. 98	2-day rotating sit-ins were staged at different Teshil headquarters by the adivasi people of southern Rajasthan for the next 20 days.
26 Dec. 00	The Movement converged on Udaipur to sit in front of the Tribal Commissioner's Office. A Rally was organized to march to the Circuit House where the Chief Minister was staying. The Chief Minister assured the Movement that he would take this issue seriously, that injustice to the people would cease and that any other possessions prior to 1980 not on the Forest Department's list would not be denied eligibility for regularization.
6 Sept. 01	A Rally and Sit-In was held in Udaipur. The Tribal Commissioner was presented with yet another Memorandum demanding that forest land, occupied by Adivasis prior to 1980, be regularized. The Tribal Commissioner responded that allotment verification camps would be set up beginning on October 2nd, 2001. He also stated that the Forest Department's list of possessions sent to the Central Government for approval would be given to the people.

28 Oct. 01	The Movement sat in front of the Forest Department offices in protest of the Forest Department's list of 5395 possessions being the final list. During their surveys to date, conducted according to the state government's 1991 notification, the FLPM documented 17,608 eligible possessions. The Movement submitted a Memorandum to the Chief Minister and to the Forest Minister declaring that the Forest Department's list is not the complete list, and using this incomplete list for regularization is unfair to the many other Adivasis in possession of forest land prior to 1980.
19 Oct. 02	Hundreds of villagers converged on Udaipur to hold Sit-Ins in front of the District Collector's Office, then the Forest Department offices, ending at the Tribal Commissioner's Office. One delegation gave a Memorandum to the Conservator of Forest to reiterate their demands to regularize their land rights and stop evictions. Another delegation met with the Tribal Commissioner. He assured them that he would convene a meeting of all Collectors and Forest Officials from the relevant Districts in an effort to resolve the situation.
3-4 April 02	The FLPM organized a 2-day workshop on Land Reform in Jaipur to take the issue of land rights for the adivasi forest dwellers to the state level. Organizations working on land reform issues, senior officials of the state government, including the President and Secretary of the Rajasthan Revenue Department, the Forest Secretary, and the Chief Conservator of Forest and a number of senior social scientists were in attendance. A number of key issues related to land reform were identified.
3 May 02	Letter from the Inspector General of Forests, based on a misinterpretation of the November 2001 Supreme Court order restraining the Central government from regularizing any encroachment without the prior permission of the Supreme Court, directed all states to vacate all encroachments on forest land by September 30th, 2002.
10 Oct. 02	Along with other organizations, the FLPM filed a writ petition in the Supreme Court as a Public Interest Litigation opposing the increase in evictions. At the same time, the FLPM presented a Memorandum to the Supreme Court appointed Central Empowered Committee requesting that evictions be stopped.
30 Oct. 02	The Ministry of Environment and Forests was compelled to issue a clarification order recognizing that not all forest dwellers were encroachers, and stating that occupants of land in their possessions prior to 1980 would not be evicted and that the 1990 orders should be adhered to.
early 2003	FLPM joined a federation of tribal and forest community organizations, initially from ten states, and formed the Campaign for Survival and Dignity (CSD) to take up a nationwide struggle to ensure the rights of forest communities are recognized and respected.
11 Mar. 03	More than 300 Adivasis from across Rajasthan congregated in front of the State Assembly in Jaipur to meet the Chief Minister and demand physical verification of their possessions as per the state government’s 1991 notification. In the absence of the Chief Minister, the Minister of Forests assured the Adivasis that verification would be completed in one month.
July 2003	The CSD (including FLPM representatives along with leaders of other regional tribal organizations), meet with the Minister of Environment and Forest (MoEF) and the Prime Minister to discuss tribal rights over forest land and forest resources. The Prime Minister directed MoEF to prepare a circular stating that there will be no more tribal evictions until verification has been done.

19-20 July 03	CSD organized a two-day Public Hearing (Jan Sunwai) on "Threats to Habitat and Livelihood", in Delhi. Fifteen thousand people from 13 states attended. The two main goals of the Public Hearing were to: bring to the attention of society at large why adivasi and other forest dwelling communities have the right to reside in their forest habitat; and develop an understanding that ensures both conservation of the forests as well as a life with dignity for adivasi communities in their forest habitat.
21 July 03	The MoEF presented an affidavit to the Supreme Court stating that the atrocities that had been committed against tribal people throughout history must be corrected and rights over forest lands should be given to them.
August 03	Nearly 17,000 Adivasis in Udaipur, Banswara, Chittor, Dungapur, Sirohi, Pali and Rajsamand Districts, who have been in possession of forest land for generations, and whose claims had not been identified by the Forest Department, began to individually present their claims to the Collectors of their respective Districts.
11 Sept. 03	A delegation of the PFLM reconvened with the Forest Minister to remind her of her assurances of March and again to request to see a copy of the list of eligible possessions sent by the Forest Department to the Central Government. The delegation gave the Chief Executive Secretary, also in attendance, their list of 17,608 eligible possessions to be acted on by the Forest Secretary. While in Jaipur the delegation contacted 16 MLAs asking for their support.
18-Jun-04	A delegation from the FLPM met with the Forest Minister to remind him of the earlier promises that had been given to the Movement by the Chief Minister and the Minister of Forest to complete verification of eligible possessions in 1 month and submit the resulting list to the Legislative Assembly. The Forest Minister again assured the Movement that he would take definite action to address regularization of forest dwellers' lands in southern Rajasthan.
18-19 Oct. 04	A FLPM delegation went to Jaipur and met the Chief Minister to inform her of the countless atrocities against the adivasi people by the Forest Department. She informed the delegation that the issue of tribal land rights was on her government's agenda and that serious consideration would be given to the issue. She contacted the Minister of Forest, and asked him to listen to the people's concerns. The following day, the delegation met the Minister of Forest to tell him of the harassments, abuses and evictions that the Forest Department had carried out against the Adivasis. The Minister assured them that he would take actions necessary to stop such atrocities.
3 Nov. 04	CSD with FLPM representation, met with the Minister of Environment and Forest to discuss tribal rights over forest land and forest resources. MoEF acknowledged that the Adivasis are not encroachers on forest lands, but have been living in the forests for thousands of years and should not be evicted. In fact, on several occasions the MoEF had directed state governments to implement regularization of tribal lands, without response at the state level.
5 Nov. 04	The CSD delegation met with the Prime Minister who also acknowledged the historical injustices against the Adivasis and expressed his concern for the issue of rights to forest lands that are occupied and protected by adivasi communities. He asked that a committee be formed to address this issue.
7-8 Dec. 04	CSD organized a national convention in Delhi at Rajendra Bhawan to bring to the attention of national politicians the need for a new law to redress the historic injustices against the Adivasis. 29 MP were in attendance.

21 Dec. 04	A high level committee, chaired by the Prime Minister, was constituted to address the problems of tribal communities who are dependent on forests for their livelihood. This Committee directed the Ministry of Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes to draft a tribal forest land Bill that would ensure that tribal land rights are protected. On this same day the MoEF was forced to issue a letter ordering all States and Union Territories to halt the evictions of forest dwellers until their rights had been settled.
3 May 05	The Prime Minister declared that the draft Bill would be submitted for approval to Cabinet during the spring budget session. When the motion to pass the Bill was raised, most Cabinet Ministers were in support. However, due to environmentalists' (e.g. the Tiger Lobby) and the MoEF's arguments that the Bill would hinder efforts to prevent forest destruction and preserve endangered wildlife, the Bill was not approved.
12 May 05	Due to the long discussion of the Forest Rights Bill in the spring budget session of Cabinet, MoEF was compelled to issue a notification to all state governments stating that no tribal people were to be evicted and asking state governments to take proper action regarding tribal rights to forest lands.
28 Feb. 05	Thousands of Adivasis went to Udaipur and marched to the Tribal Commissioner's Office. The Tribal Commissioner was given another Memorandum demanding that evictions be stopped. The Tribal Commissioner phoned the Minister of Forest telling him that no one should be evicted from their forest land without first obtaining approval from the FLPM.
7-21 March 05	FLPM joined a national level Sit-In organized by the CSD to be held in Delhi, at Jantar Mantar, involving all states experiencing atrocities against forest dwellers. People from different tribal areas took turns sitting over the 2 week period.
24 July 05	The FLPM and representatives from the national Communist Parties decided to take collective action in the fight for forest land rights. A Rally and Sit-In was organized in every Block to inform villagers of this decision and to build solidarity.
16 Sept. 05	More than 5,000 members of the FLPM and the Communist Party went to Udaipur to hold a collective Rally demanding their rights. Local tribal leaders, MLA's and national Communist Party leaders attended.
15 Nov. 05	The FLPM joined the CSD to launch a "Fill the Jails" movement to protest against the ongoing evictions and brutal violation of human rights of the tribal communities. They also protested against the delay in tabling the forest land rights Bill.
13 Dec. 05	The Minister of Tribal Affairs introduced to Parliament the "Schedule Tribes (Recognition of Forest Rights) Bill 2005".
Jan. 06	The draft Bill was referred to a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) for review.
9 May 06	JPC presented it's unanimous report with significant recommended changes to the Tribal Bill at a parliamentary hearing.

31 July 06 5 Aug 06	Under the banner of the FLPM, some 20 families from Gogunda and Kotra Blocks of Udaipur District, that were being threatened with eviction by the Forest Department sat in front of the Tribal Commissioner's Office and demanded they not be evicted from their forest land. Five days later, the Tribal Commissioner met with the Collector and a Forest Department Official and told him that given the introduction of the forest rights Bill to parliament, these evictions must be stopped. These families were given written assurance from the Tribal Commissioner that they would not be evicted without proper verification consistent with the new Bill once it became law. The people returned to their homes.
21-25 Aug. 06	Adivasis from across the country congregated at a Sit-In at Jantar Mantar to demand the passage of the Scheduled Tribes (Recognition of Forest Rights) Bill 2005, with the required amendments as per the recommendations of the Joint Parliamentary Committee. This Sit-In involved five days of people from across the country protesting and demanding their rights. The protestors received declarations of support from every corner of the political spectrum, from numerous civil society leaders, and from everyone from environmentalists to former Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribes Commissioners.
22 Nov. 06 18 Dec. 06	A Sit-In began in front of the Jantar Mantar demanding that the Tribal Bill be approved during the winter session of Parliament. The participants vowed to continue this Sit-In until the Bill was passed.
29 Nov. 06	Mass demonstration where held in six cities – Delhi, Mumbai, Bhubaneshwar, Ranchi, Chennai and Bangalore. Jantar Mantar witnessed a ten thousand strong demonstration of tribal people and forest dwellers from Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh. More than 2,000 FLPM members from Rajasthan the other forest dwellers and their supporters in Delhi. Protesters demanded that government pass the Forest Rights Bill with JPC amendments.
15 Dec. 06 18 Dec. 06	The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act 2006, was passed by Lok Sabha and by Raja Sabha 3 days later.
7 Jan. 07	Meeting between Divisional level members of the FLPM and the FLPM's Coordinating Committee was held in Udaipur to plan the implementation in southern Rajasthan of the new forest rights Act.
28-30 Jan. 07	Meeting of CSD in Bhopal to plan the implementation of new Act.

Source: Astha Sansthan

APPENDIX 2

Table 1: RVKP's Development Programmes In Jhadol and Kotra Blocks of Udaipur District by December 2006

Sl.	RVKP Projects	Kotra	Jhadol	Total
1	Total Villages	252	258	510
2	Tribal Villages	252	233	485
3	Samparkit Gram (VKP Connected Village)	252	233	485
4	Gram Panchayats (Government Village Councils)	31	45	76
5	Mahila Samiti (Women's Committee)	1	63	64
6	Bachat Samuha (Savings Committee)	--	5	05
7	Shakti Kendra (Power Centres)	12	12	24
8	Vikash Kendra (Development Centre)	31	45	76
9	Prakalp Yukta Gram (Project Village)	74	58	132
10	Purna Kalin Karyakarta (Full Time Worker)	10	10	20
11	Vanvasi Purna Kalin (Full Time Tribals)	7	6	13
12	Ansh Kalin Karyakarta (Part Time Worker)	45	56	101
13	Vanvasi Ansh Kalin (Part Time Tribals)	41	48	89
14	Total Population	183504	193810	377314
15	Tribal Population	163903 (89%)	135152 (70%)	299055 (79%)

Table 2: Shradha Jagaran (Religious) Kendra in Kotra and Jhadol

	Weekly	Fortnightly	Monthly	Total
Kotra	3	9	4	16
Jhadol	12	22	--	34
Total	15	31	4	50

Table 3: Shiksha Prakalp (Education) in Kotra and Jhadol

	Ekal Vidyalaya	Student	Adarsh Vidya Mandir (Schools)	Students	Acharya (Teacher)
Kotra	26	798	1	408	12
Jhadol	40	--	2	241	9
Total	66	--	3	649	21

Table 4: Khel-Kud (Sports) in Kotra and Jhadol

	Daily	Weekly	Total
Kotra	10	3	13
Jhadol	1	--	1
Total	11	3	14

Table 5: Shakti Kendra (Power Centres) in Kotra and Jhadol

Sl.	Name of Shakti Kendra (Kotra)	Total Panchayat	Total Villages	Name of Shakti Kendra (Jhadol)	Total Panchayats	Total villages
1	Badli	2	21	Kolyari	4	24
2	Mamer	6	25	Phalasia	6	15
3	Mahad	1	13	Thobawada	3	26
4	Kotra	3	21	Madri	4	18
5	Dadhmiyan	2	23	Baghpura	7	35
6	Dhadhmata	3	19	Jhadol	5	26
7	Mandwa	2	16	Deya	2	12
8	Samoli	3	27	Magwas	5	18
9	Mewaron Ka Math	2	20	Ogona	1	15
10	Malwa Ka Choura	2	26	Birothi	3	24
11	Merpur	2	23	Panarva	3	23
12	Beckriya	3	18	Atatia	2	22
	Total	31	252	Total	45	258

Source: Rajasthan Vanvasi Kalyan Parishad

APPENDIX 3
SEVA MANDIR

Seva Mandir Head-Office in Udaipur

Seva Mandir's Child Literacy Camp in Jhadol

Seva Mandir's *Balbadi* (child care centre) in Dhalla, Jhadol

Seva Mandir's Fish rearing Project in Vasela, Kotra

Seva Mandir's *Dai Maa* (birth attendants) training in Kotra

Seva Mandir's Staff fixing the Iron Fortification Project in Jhadol

Seva Mandir's *Jan Shikshan Nilayam* (village library) at Magwas, Jhadol

Seva Mandir's NFE Teacher Meeting in Kotra

Seva Mandir *Samudayeek Bhawan* (community centre) in Sadha, Kotra

ASTHA SANSTHAN

Astha Head-Office in Udaipur

Tribal People entering Kotra to attend Astha's *Milan Mela* 2006

Panchayat Jagruk Manch Training at Astha Office, Udaipur

Kavita Ji, Harsh Mander Ji, Ashwani Ji and Ginny Ji at the *Milan Mela* 2006

Astha and AVM's Awareness Campaign for the NREGA in Kotra


Astha's Activists Auditing the NREGA Job Cards in Kotra

Astha Activists on Stage during an NREGA *Jan Sunwai* (public hearing) in Kotra


A Gathering of Tribal People at a *Jan Sunwai* in Kotra


An old Man is escorted to present his problems before the Government Officials

RAJASTHAN VANVASI KALYAN PARISHAD

The RVKP Head-Office in Udaipur

The Hindutva Flag Flying in Kotra

Prayer and *Tilak* Ceremony at the Kotra Secondary School

The Lord Ram and Hanuman Temple in Kotra School Campus

Sensitive Kotra: Police Patrol in Kotra during a Muslim Festival

Beneswar Dham Festival: Holiest Place for the Tribals in Rajasthan

Rajasthan Chief-Minister Mrs. Raje and her Tribal Minister at the *Beneswar Dham Mela*


RSS Chief K.S. Sudarshan & RVKP Chief R.S. Bhil at *Rashtra Shakti Sammelan*


A Gathering of Tribal People at the *Rashtra Shakti Sammelan* in Udaipur

The RVKP's Ongoing Hostel Project in Udaipur

The Hindu Symbol "Om" on the Wall of a Tribal House in Kotra

Tribal Students Returning Home from a Christian Mission School in Madri, Jhadol